

Hyphens were missing from this file. Some have been restored

Jewel Ornament of Liberation Tuscany 1985

Questions and Answers on The Jewel Ornament of Liberation

Il Convento, Tuscany, September-October 1985

Present: Vessantara, Suvajra, Prakasha, Buddhadasa, Tejamitra, Buddhapalita, Danavira, Dhammarati, Lalitaratna, Prasannasiddhi, Dharmadhara, Shantiraja. (ordination names:) Ratnottara, Jnanottara, Padmottara, Bodhimitra, Bodhananda, Bodhivajra, Guhyavajra, Guhyaratna, Guhyasiddhi, Paramajyoti, Paramananda, Paramabodhi, Bodhiruchi, Dharmaruchi, Gunaruchi, Moksapriya, Moksabandhu, Moxananda, Vimalaprabha, Vimalaraja, Vimalabodhi, Vimalajyoti.

Tape 1, Side 1

Vessantara: ... We reckon to spend about three days of study on each chapter. We've got 13 questions.

Sangharakshita: We are, by the way, looking after the voice prints that were provided for?

Vessantara: We'll sort that out. We don't need to. We haven't usually done voice prints of everyone in this situation. I'll start. Gampopa, in his first line, invokes Manjusri, and you have suggested that the figure of Manjusri may be related to that of the Brahma Sanankumara, who appears in the Mahagovinda Sutta in the [Digha] Nikaya. You may have gone into this, but I am not clear quite what relationship you are suggesting between the figure of Manjusri and Sanankumara. Is it that you feel that the Bodhisattva figure Manjusri is actually derived from the Brahma Sanankumara? If so, can you suggest how that process came about, and can you trace a connection between any other Bodhisattva figures and Brahma figures? Lastly, what is the relation of the Vajrapani Bodhisattva to the Vajrapani who appears in the Pali Canon for instance, in the Ambattha Sutta?

S: Let's have those questions one by one.

Vessantara: Firstly, you have suggested that the figure of Manjusri may be related to that of the Brahma Sanankumara. Could you trace out the nature of the relationship? Is it that the Bodhisattva figure, or the form of Manjusri as it has come down to us, is derived from that of Sanankumara, do you think?

S: First of all, I don't look at the whole matter in the usual as it were Western critical historical way at least, not primarily. One finds in Buddhist canonical literature, one finds in the general tradition of the Mahayana, especially Mahayana spiritual practice, the figure of Manjughosa. Presumably that means something, so presumably that corresponds to something; [2] presumably it isn't just a flight of fancy. Similarly, in the Buddhist canonical literature, especially the Pali canonical literature, one finds reference to the Brahma Sanankumara, so in the same way presumably that means something; presumably that corresponds to something; Presumably that too is not just a flight of fancy. So when one sees certain resemblances between the figure of Manjughosa, as depicted in one branch, let us say,

of Buddhist canonical literature, and the figure of Sanankumara as depicted in another branch, one begins to think that perhaps they correspond or refer to the same spiritual reality, let us say. In other words, one is not approaching the question primarily from a historical point of view at all. It is as though, more fully in the Mahayana, less fully in I won't say the Hinayana, but in the perhaps cultural context of the Hinayana one sees what appears to be the same spiritual figure, or one sees people having experienced what seems to be the same spiritual figure. Therefore, one tends to think of the figure of Manjughosa in the Mahayana, and Sanankumara in at least the cultural context of the Hinayana or the Theravada, as approximating to one and the same spiritual reality. There are various reasons for that, and here we come to the historical/critical approach ... (break in recording?) ... Mahayana tradition, especially, I believe, in the Chinese tradition, Manjughosa has a title which is translated as 'He of the Five Peaks'. He is also represented in art as possessing five sort of crests, if you like, of hair; and, similarly, one of the names of Sanankumara is Pancasikha, which means Five Crests. Not that the identification of Pancasikha with Sanankumara is altogether clear, but it seems clear enough. So facts of this sort suggest that the representations of these two figures, in their respective traditions, are as it were feeling after one and the same spiritual reality. This, I think, goes some way towards answering the first question. I have dealt with it at some length in other connections on other occasions. Then the second question?

Vessantara: The second question was: Assuming that the Bodhisattva figure is in some way derived from Brahma figures, can you suggest how this process came about?

S: Yes so it is not really a question of derivation at all. This is if you look at the whole matter [in] what I call the Western critical manner, it is not a question of deriving one literary concept from another. It is a question of approximating from different angles to a common spiritual reality. Nonetheless, there are on the literary/historical level hints, or resemblances, which do cause one to think that the two figures do actually concern the same what I have called spiritual reality.

Vessantara: So do you think it would be wrong to hypothesise that the Buddha lived in a world of Brahmas, as it were, and over a period of centuries the figure of Brahma Sanankumara evolved into Manjusri?

S: Well, it is not really a question of hypothesising, as far as the canonical literature is concerned; because the canonical literature is peopled by all sorts of nonhuman beings, and the Buddha is regularly described as 'the teacher of gods and men'. So one may make of that what one will, but this is how the canonical literature represents the situation; so in the Pali canonical literature, for instance, we find the figure of Sanankumara, in the Mahayana canonical literature we find the figure of Manjughosha, and they seem strangely to resemble each other. So one may be forgiven for thinking that, within their respective contexts, they in fact refer to one and the same spiritual or perhaps even transcendental personality.

Vessantara: There is a bit more. Can you trace a connection between any other Bodhisattvas and Brahmas?

S: You mentioned ?

[3]

Vessantara: I went on to mention the Vajrapani and the Vajra... in the Pali Canon.

S: We certainly find the name Vajrapani in the Pali canonical literature. I was having some thoughts about this quite recently, because recently I was reflecting on the significance of Vajrapani in the purely Mahayana-cum-Vajrayana context; especially I was thinking in terms of Vajrapani's connection with the animitta samadhi in the Pali canonical literature we find that Vajrapani is, on a number of occasions, represented as being in attendance on the Buddha. He is usually standing over the Buddha, standing above the Buddha, and he bears in his right hand, as his name suggests, a blazing thunderbolt; and he very often has this blazing thunderbolt uplifted, because he is ready to hurl it. He is ready to hurl it on the head of someone who does not answer when the Buddha questions him, or does not answer successfully or appropriately. It is strange that this figure should appear. So, reflecting upon it, it seems to me I can't say quite why this idea occurs to me but it seems to me that Vajrapani represented the genius of the Buddha: genius in the old Roman sense of sort of tutelary deity or guardian spirit, or if you like, using the expression in a quite popular way, higher self. But to go back for a minute to this question of Vajrapani and the Mahayana and Vajrayana, and their connection with the animitta samadhi. What is the animitta samadhi? This is the transcendental samadhi realized by means of Insight into the impermanence of all conditioned things. So when one realizes the animitta samadhi, one realizes to put it quite briefly and simply that no concept is truly applicable to Ultimate Reality. So the animitta samadhi represents the samadhi which consists in the realization of the nonapplicability of all concepts to Ultimate Reality; in other words, that samadhi annihilates all such concepts in respect of their applicability to Ultimate Reality. So it is only appropriate that that samadhi should be associated with Vajrapani, who annihilates, or who smashes, at least, everything in this case, all concepts with his vajra, with his thunderbolt. Not only all concepts but, obviously, all the ignorance, all the mental confusion, which arise from the wrong combination of concepts, whether in regard to Ultimate Reality or relative reality. So, in a way, it is the same, not just deva Vajrapani, but in a sense the same Bodhisattva Vajrapani, one might say, that hovers over the head of the Buddha even in the Theravada scriptures. Because does one really think that the Buddha needs a sort of mundane auxiliary in this way? So Vajrapani represents the Buddha's own as it were delusion-annihilating genius. He is a higher aspect if that is the appropriate term of the Buddha himself, and it is the Buddha's own vajra-like intelligence, not an extraneous divinity, that is going to annihilate the delusion of the person who is the Buddha's interlocutor in the sutta. So I think one can establish in this way a connection not only between Samatsumara and Manjughosha, but also, possibly, between Vajrapani the deva who appears in the Pali Canon, and Vajrapani the great Bodhisattva, the archetypal Bodhisattva, who appears in the Mahayana and in the Vajrayana. This leaves us only with Avalokitesvara as regards the triad of great Bodhisattvas, but I have not as yet been able to discover any connection between any figure in the Pali Canon and the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. However, we shall see.

Gerry: What about Brahma Samapatti in that connection? There does seem to be a relationship between Brahma Samapatti and Avalokitesvara, inasmuch as he asked the Buddha to save beings.

S: But then presumably all Bodhisattvas do that. All Bodhisattvas have compassion. So, yes, it could be that Brahma Samapatti represents Avalokitesvara on a lower level; perhaps he is an embodiment of Avalokitesvara on a lower level; but there needs to be, I think, a more specific link than that.

[4]

Vessantara: Wayne has a question about the eight great Bodhisattvas.

Wayne: I just wanted to ask if you knew anything about Nivaranaviskambhin and Gaganagarbha

S: Oh what are they?

Wayne: In Guenther's footnotes, ...

S: It's Guenther's footnotes, isn't it? It must first of all be pointed out I think Guenther does in fact mention this that there are several sets of eight. I think I mention this in The Three Jewels, don't I? What are the ones you have asked about? Nivaranaviskambhin that name means 'The Remover of All Obstacles'. And Gaganagarbha means 'Sky Womb' gavana is 'sky', the expanse of the sky; garbha is 'womb'. But they do not figure very prominently as living personalities, so to speak, in Mahayana literature. I can't recall any incidents or stories about them. No doubt there are, somewhere in the scriptures, but they don't appear to be at all well known. I think theirs are among the names which do vary from one set of eight Bodhisattvas to another. For instance, you notice there is Ksitigarbha, who is 'Earth Womb'; Gaganagarbha is 'Sky Womb'. Sometimes instead of Gaganagarbha we have Akasagarbha. They are more often a pair: Ksitigarbha and Akasagarbha akasa meaning, again, the sky, in a slightly different sense. No doubt there are eight corresponding to the eight directions of space.

Vessantara: Suvajra had a question about sunyata.

Suvajra: I didn't ask it.

Prasannasiddhi: This refers to a quote on p. 3. Tibetan texts often use language which seems to be badly constructed, even illogical. E.g. p.3: 'Because of the permeation of Sambuddhakaya, of the undifferentiatedness of Tathata, And of the existence of families, all sentient beings are constantly endowed with Buddha nature' which is not really a very logical sentence.

S: It appears to be! 'Because of the permeation of Sambuddhakaya, of the undifferentiatedness of Tathata, And of the existence of families, all sentient beings are constantly endowed with Buddha nature.' In other words admittedly, the construction could be clearer but if one reads it like that, it does become clear. In other words, there are three reasons given; three reasons on account of which all sentient beings are constantly endowed with Buddha nature. One, because of the permeation of Sambuddhakaya; two, because of the undifferentiatedness of the Tathata; and, three, because of the existence of families.

Prasannasiddhi: I suppose we were in doubt over 'the existence of families'. What actually ... ?

S: The families, of course, here are the five Buddha families; aren't they?

Prasannasiddhi: I was going to ask you if you had any observations on the strange formulation. You often get, in translations of Tibetan scriptures, very strange formulations.

S: Well, first of all, this is a quotation from the Uttaratantra, which despite its title is not a Tantra, it is a work of the so-called Garbha school. The work itself is in Sanskrit. That was translated into Tibetan. Then we have a translation into English by an Austrian! So it is not very surprising, perhaps, if it doesn't read [5] very smoothly in English. If I had been the translator, I would have added words in brackets. I would have put: 'Because of the permeation of Sambuddhakaya', then in brackets '(because of) the undifferentiatedness of the Tathata, and (because of) the existence of families, all sentient beings are constantly endowed with Buddha nature.' That would make it quite clear.

Prasannasiddhi: OK.

Vessantara: Dhammarati had two questions, and I have picked one.

S: About ?

Vessantara: About Tathagatagarbha.

Dhammarati: I apologise for the way most of the questions are [phrased] I'll read them. On p. 2, Gampopa suggests that we are moved towards Nirvana because 'Tathagatagarbha embraces and permeates all beings.' In the seminar transcript you use Gampopa's analogy of milk and butter to suggest that the best way to understand this is not that Tathagatagarbha somehow ...s, but human beings can become Enlightened human beings with as it were ...in the same way as milk becomes butter and not ...ogically useful to think that in some sense Buddha is a way of ... But Gampopa also uses the similes of silver and silver ore, and sesame oil and sesame seeds, which does suggest to me some essences are present which are existing but obscured. So (1) did Gampopa think of Tathagatagarbha as somehow existing but obscured in unenlightened human beings? (2) I am under the impression that I have come across from your writing of dhyana as some kind of natural state which is obscured by the hindrances which are removed by meditation practices. Is that not analogous to the idea of a somehow present but obscured Tathagatagarbha? And the similes of the hindrances where you have clean water that is ... in various ways seem to me to suggest that. (3) Doesn't the Vajrasattva visualization, where one contacts the visualization, you've got the sense of defilements which are washed away to reveal primordial purity doesn't that suggest a similar idea to the Tathagatagarbha? So I'll ask the first question.

S: I'll take that clause by clause. It is really quite simple, [but] let's have it bit by bit. Just the questions. Dhammarati: (1) Did Gampopa think of Tathagatagarbha as somehow existing or obscured in unenlightened human beings?

S: I doubt very much whether he thought of it as an entity. I think that would be very surprising, inasmuch as that would go against the trend of Buddhist thought itself. Though there was one doctrinal school of Tibetan Buddhism which did, apparently, treat the garbha as a metaphysical entity; that was the Jong(?) school, which was regarded by all the other schools as heretical in that respect. Buddhong(?) happened to belong to that particular school. Western scholars suspect some kind of Vedantic infiltration. Nonetheless, there is a class of sutras which does give some support to this idea that is, provided one takes their language rather literally; and it is, of course, a question whether we should do that. There is, for instance, the Sanskrit Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra. This contains quite a number of references to the Tathagatagarbha. I have mentioned this, just a little, in my Eternal Legacy,

where I give a synopsis of this particular sutra. So, to answer that first question, it is highly unlikely that Gampopa did in fact believe in the garbha as an entity. He, no doubt, like most other Buddhist [6] thinkers, took the references to the garbha which we get in some of the Mahayana sutras as to be taken not literally [but] metaphorically.

Dhammarati: So ... the two analogies which are milk and butter, analogy or just less accurate analogies? (?)

S: In a way less accurate. I think one must also remember that the emphasis seems to be very much on effort, because you don't get butter from milk without strenuous churning. You don't get oil from oil-seeds without strenuous pressing. And what is the third one?

Dhammarati: Silver and ore.

S: And you don't get silver from ore without equally strenuous smelting. So, in all cases, it is not, in a sense, as though the butter or the oil or the silver is already there; it is the potential for those things that is already there. And that potentiality becomes actuality only as the result of a certain operation. So therefore it would be more correct to stick to the old Buddhist formulation: 'In dependence upon such-and-such, such-and-such arises.' There is a further extension of this. For instance this is another simile that is often used in order to extract oil you have to press oil-seeds; it is no use pressing sand! So the Buddhist position again here represents a Middle Way; because, on the one hand, it is not that the oil is already there, it is that the oil is produced only after a certain operation is gone through. But then, on the other hand, it is not possible to go through that operation with respect to anything; if you want to get oil, you have to go through that process only with regard to oil-seeds. So, on the one hand, there is no question of the substance that is produced preexisting; on the other hand, there is no question of it having no connection at all with the particular material from which it is as it were produced. So what were the other questions?

Dhammarati: The second part of the question is the idea that ... your writing of dhyana as a natural state which is obscured by hindrances, and it is not so much that you create dhyana but you remove the hindrances by the meditations; and I wondered if that wasn't analogous to the idea of present-but-obscured Tathagatagarbha?

S: Well, yes and no. If one takes the language literally, it is; but equally, that literal language is not to be interpreted literally. One cannot really think of another level of the mind, which is a dhyanic level, [as] actually existing but not experienced; that would seem to be a contradiction in terms. Perhaps the most that one could say is that, in the case of that present mind, in dependence upon which, as a result of effort, the dhyana state easily manifests, with regard to that particular state you could say, in a manner of speaking, that the dhyana state was as it were lurking beneath the surface. But it would be no more than a manner of speaking; because a central element of that dhyanic experience would be that it is conscious, that it is aware; so you cannot speak of that sort of state of consciousness or awareness as being there as it were unrealized, which means that you would not be conscious, not be aware, of it. So I think, though we may use this language of, let us say, entities in a sort of metaphorical poetic way, we should not try to press it literally or extract any sort of philosophical doctrine from it in a logical manner. I think that is using that language in an illegitimate way, or pushing it in an illegitimate way. It is almost like speaking of the sunrise, and then going on to draw conclusions which depend upon the fact of taking the rising of the

sun quite [7] literally and not just as a metaphorical expression. In the case of the sun, of course, it is not completely metaphorical, inasmuch as you do actually perceive the sun rising; you know that that is a mistake that is, at least, if you know a bit of astronomy you know that it is a mistake, and no doubt Suvajra could explain exactly how we come to make that mistake. But since we all have unbounded faith in science, we don't ... so we don't bother to work it out for ourselves. But it is rather disconcerting sometimes when the scriptures themselves jump from one kind of image to another. For instance, in the Ratnagunavipaka(?) there is a verse which says that the I think it is the garbha or the dhatu is hidden in ordinary beings, just like a beautiful image of the Buddha swathed in rags, or like the infant existing in the mother's womb. So it is not surprising that perhaps people who are a little unsophisticated in their thinking should take such images, such comparisons, quite literally. They almost ask to be taken literally; but nonetheless we must not do so. Because even the image of the Buddha, even the child in the womb, is not an entity in the sense of being absolutely static and unchanging. One must not forget that, either. It does seem that, when we read the Buddhist scriptures, we really need to have our wits about us and not take literally what is not, it would seem, meant to be taken literally.

Dhammarati: There is the third part of the question ...in terms of the ... Vajrasattva practice, where the liquid washes away defilements ... purity.

S: Again, obviously it is a very inspiring practice, but expressed in that way it expresses only relative truth, one might say; or, in a sense, perhaps not even relative truth. It certainly does not express the absolute Truth; though thinking of things in that way, thinking of the process of purification in that way, we may come to see, we may come to experience, the absolute Truth. But, again, as The Awakening of Faith says, we use words to get free from words until we reach the pure wordless Essence. We must always ask ourselves what the words are trying to communicate; not fasten our attention on the words themselves taken quite literally.

Vessantara: ...

Dhammarati: Yes, the second question. It was connected with the first question. It seems to me that because Gampopa in terms of ... beginning ... had the sort of postulate that the Tathagatagarbha ... beings moving from samsara to Nirvana, and ... Guenther suggests quite a different explanation of how beings ... move towards Nirvana, and it seems to me to be quite a ..vious explanation; and what he says is: 'There is nothing pessimistic about Buddhism. The position of misery of human life is comparable to that of pain in an organism, indicating that something somewhere is not in order. Human life is goal-seeking, every step towards the goal bringing increasing happiness. Every goal-achievement has its appropriate reward of inner satisfaction and joy. Every deviation from the path violates the goal-seeking character of human life and is rewarded by suffering.' It seems to me with this mechanism ...of time become a Buddha by working to avoid pain ... to joy. It seems to me a much less metaphysical explanation than Gampopa's, and what I wondered was, from your point of view as a traditional Buddhist ..., is that a sufficient account of what actually happens, when human beings ... ?

S: I don't know to what extent Guenther is influenced by behaviourism. He may be, because he tends, as [was] once said of somebody else, to as it were conduct his education in public! He introduces you to all his favourite authors, usually in [8] footnotes, as soon as he has read them. I think this needs to be scrutinised quite carefully. 'There is nothing pessimistic about

Buddhism' well, we will let that pass, fair enough. 'The position of misery in human life is comparable to that of pain in an organism, indicating that something somewhere is not in order.' Perhaps we can let that pass. I think I have made this point myself; except that the comparability is strictly limited, because in the case of an individual organism there is no question of its reflecting upon the pain, or on the possible source of the pain. It may move instinctively, as it were, away from the pain or the source of pain, but in so doing it may, under certain conditions or in certain circumstances, move in the direction of greater pain; it may even move in the direction of death. But, of course, if you invoke the theory of evolution and the theory of natural selection, those amoebae that make the wrong choices will automatically be eliminated, and only those that make the right choices will survive. But again it is the species that survives; the choices are of significance for survival of the species, not so much of significance for the individual organism. But, in the case of human life, in the case of human beings, especially in the context of spiritual life, one is concerned only with the individual and the individual's reaction to pain. But inasmuch as it is an individual reaction, and inasmuch as that individual reaction is conscious and reflective, the comparability between the position of misery in human life and that of pain in an organism, I would say, is very limited to say the least. One must not overdo the comparabilities; perhaps Guenther does. Human life is goal-seeking, every step towards the goal bringing increasing happiness.' I think this could be misunderstood. You could accept that human life is goal-seeking. Whether that goal is necessarily happiness is perhaps questionable. It depends, of course, again on how one defines happiness. Sometimes in our goal-seeking we incur great pain and suffering. You could say that that is because what we endure the pain and suffering for gives us, in a sense, greater happiness. But we very often do not think in those terms; we think in terms of 'doing right'. But again you could say we do right because it gives us happiness; but is that actually the case? Isn't that a rather simplistic analysis? Recently this is going off a bit at a tangent, but let me do that I was reading a selection from Foxe's Book of Martyrs. It is a very famous sixteenth century work, one of the most famous works in English literature well, one of the most popular works in English literature though not much read nowadays. It is an account, mainly, of the martyrdoms of various Protestants during the reign of Queen Mary; and it is quite remarkable, reading the accounts of these martyrdoms, what quite ordinary people, people of very little education, were prepared to suffer usually in the form of burning at the stake for the sake of their religious beliefs. So one could not but get the feeling that they were not motivated by a desire for happiness; that they did not think in those sort of terms. Happiness, no doubt, came into it, but one gets the impression [that it did so] in a very incidental way. They were motivated by a search, one might say, for truth, or what was right something of that sort not just straightforwardly by a desire for happiness. So when one says 'Human life is goal-seeking, and every step towards the goal brings increasing happiness,' one has to look at that rather carefully. But you could say that, if every step towards the goal brings increasing happiness, what does not bring increasing happiness is not a step towards the goal; but there are some things that are steps towards the goal, in a Buddhist sense, that do not bring you increasing happiness at least, not for the time being. So I think Guenther is being a bit slipshod here. Every goal-achievement has its appropriate reward of inner satisfaction and joy' yes, I suppose that is true. 'Every deviation from this path violates the goal-seeking [9] character of human life and is rewarded by suffering'; well, I think, yes, one can speak of human life as goal-seeking, but I think one has to be very careful not to define that goal, or that goal-seeking, in too narrowly hedonistic terms; and I think this is probably what Guenther comes perilously near to doing.

Dhammarati: I must say that, first of all, ... 'pain, cause of pain, cease in pain, path that leads

to cease in pain', and ... it seems to me one of the main characteristics is early on the increase in positive emotion but if Guenther's terms were clarified and tightened up the ... in the way you have done, would you be left with a satisfactory account of the movement from conditioned reactive experience towards unconditioned, creative experience?

S: Well, you would, provided you made it clear that that goal orientation of human nature consists, by definition almost, of an orientation, however remote, in the direction of the Transcendental. You have to bring that out and make it explicitly, otherwise the resultant statement would not be sufficiently metaphysical, so to speak, to square with what Gampopa says in the text. That position, of course, introducing that transcendental element, would not be without its own difficulties, philosophically speaking; but that, no doubt, is quite another question. Well, Gampopa's own formulations in his text are not without their difficulties, philosophically speaking. Vessantara: A question about time, Bhante. In the seminar on this chapter, you say that your sense of time changes at each stage of the Path a number of subclauses (?) is it ?

S: I don't quite remember the context of that. Perhaps ... not clear just from the bare statement that one's sense of time changes at every stage of the Path. I suppose it is because one's total experience changes. One's time experience is part of one's overall experience, so if one's overall experience changes radically, presumably one's experience of space changes radically, too. Everybody knows, I think, at least by hearsay, that under the influence of psychedelic drugs your time sense is considerably modified; perhaps your spatial sense is modified, too. All sorts of things are modified. Consciousness itself is modified. Anyway, let's take the question now.

Vessantara: Is it possible to give in words a description of how your sense of time changes as you develop, and you said that time is a function of consciousness, but can you give any further explanation of why the time sense is affected by changes in consciousness, ... process ...?

S: One can only say that, according to Buddhist thought, time is what we

Tape 1, Side 2 all in Western terminology subjective. Time is *pannatti* or *prajnapti*, that is to say it is as it were a concept, not a reality. It is part of the structure of consciousness itself. So if one refers to time as changing, in what sense does time change, or what would constitute a change of time? not a change in time, but a change of time? That would obviously involve an investigation of the nature of time. I suppose that the fundamental characteristic of time is that it passes. It is also said to be irreversible, though that has recently been queried, I gather. But at least it seems just to pass, to flow. So one might say that a change of time would consist in a change of the rate of the flow though, obviously, there cannot be any absolute time, for reasons which perhaps Einstein made clear; but, relatively speaking, one can have a faster rate of flow and a slower rate of flow, so time could change in that way, relative to the state of consciousness, and this is actually what we do find mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures. You are familiar, no doubt, with the idea of different worlds, different planes? It is said, [10] for instance, that a year of human life is equivalent to a day in the lives of the lowest order of gods, and a year in their life is equivalent to a day in the life of the next order of gods, and so on right up to the Mahabrahmas, whose day is millions and billions of years long by our reckoning. So perhaps one can see things in some such way as that. But even what that means is not by any means immediately obvious. One needs to reflect on it, even

ask oneself what does it mean to say that a day in the life of this being is equivalent to a year in the life of that being? Let us not assume that we understand what the statement actually means. Or let us not even assume that the statement as such is intelligible! It may be only a combination of words: this is what the scriptures say, but we have to reflect on them quite deeply not just take the literal surface meaning and try to see what the words are endeavouring to convey or to communicate. Let me just add that we all know that our sense of time changes in our dreams. It is well known that you can have a very lengthy dream, maybe lasting for years, and you wake up and you discover that you have just nodded off for a few minutes. So perhaps that also needs to be pondered on: what is happening?

: In the preface, Guenther gives credit

S: Where is that?

: It's before ...

S: Which page are you referring to?

: P.viii, about three paragraphs from the end. 'I received incidental help and advice from the Incarnate Lama, Darm.do sprul.sku Thub.bstan lhun.grub legs.bzan' and so on. I was going to ask you, first, is that the same as our

S: Well, yes, that's Dhardo Rimpoche. Guenther paid two or three visits to Kalimpong, and I met him there in the early '50s. There is probably going to be a reference to that in the volume of Memoirs that I am working on at the moment. And, of course, don't forget that quite a number of articles by him appeared in Stepping Stones, the magazine I was editing from Kalimpong. I think that is how I came in contact with him; I heard about him from a friend, sent him the magazine, and we met, when I think I read out that chapter, didn't I? we met in the ... and I got him to contribute to Stepping Stones, and after that he came up to Kalimpong two or three times. I did not have very much personal contact with him. I can't say that we didn't get on well; it is as though I think he probably was not very interested in having any contact with me, he was very much interested in having contact with Tibetan scholars and lamas and so on; I think I was relatively uninteresting, so far as he was concerned. I did have a little bit of contact with his wife, who, though a scholar, was not quite a scholar in the sense that he was; I think I found her, in a way, a more sympathetic character. She also contributed an article to Stepping Stones. Yes, he no doubt trotted along to Dhardo Rimpoche on the occasion of his visits to Kalimpong, as many scholars did a lot of scholars visiting Kalimpong used to go along to Dhardo Rimpoche, and he was very helpful to them; he was quite a fund of knowledge. Some of them acknowledged their debt to him, others didn't. One whom he did help a lot and who I believe acknowledged the debt was Nebesky-Wojkowitz, who got a lot of material from him for his book on Tibetan Oracles and Demons. Dhardo Rimpoche supplied him with, or lent him, rare texts and so on. He was very helpful in this way to visiting scholars. It would be difficult to say how many scholars he did help in this way, but there must have been some dozens of them, fairly well-known ones.

Vessantara: Kevin had a question.

[11]

Kevin: In today's study we took a brief look at some of the background information about the

different schools of Tibetan Buddhism, and we touched upon the Rimed or Rigpa school of Tibetan Buddhism. I was wondering if you could give some more information on the foundation school of Buddhism, and perhaps your involvement in it, its situation at present, and also where you stand in terms of the Rigpa or Rimed ...

S: Rimed. This was not originally a school so much as a sort of loose movement. Rimed means no boundary, no barrier. Ri means a mountain or chain of mountains, so it means metaphorically speaking no barrier, no division. This was the movement in Tibetan Buddhism which sprang up especially in the eastern part of Tibet, I think towards the end of the last century or the latter part of the last century, and to the best of my recollection two Tibetan lamas were involved in it or were its leading figures. One was, I think it was Jamyong Tulku, if I am not mistaken; the other was certainly the Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche who was the predecessor of the Jamyang Khyentse with whom I was associated. The movement, broadly speaking, was what we would call an ecumenical movement. It was a movement of lamas belonging to different lineages and traditions who got together and who, if one may use the expression, swapped lineages or traditions. One feature of the movement was that they did not confuse lineages or traditions Tibetans generally consider this quite important they kept them distinct, but inasmuch as they swapped, all the lamas involved (I am using the word lama in its strict sense here; more in the sense of gurus) ended up with the same lineages and the same traditions, the same initiations. So, in that sense, they all belonged to one and the same school, which was the ecumenical school, you could say. I was associated with Jamyang Khyentse, as everybody knows, and he of course is the successor of the original Jamyang Khyentse who was one of the co-founders of this school, was a representative of the Rimed school. I didn't discuss this with him at any time, to the best of my recollection, though it was very much in the air because he was very broad-minded, very tolerant, catholic in the true sense. So there was a sort of air of Rimed about his movement, his followers and his disciples and his entourage. He was on very friendly terms with lamas of all sects and all schools. I do remember him, though, telling me once, I think it was, that in terms of the monastery to which he belonged, and of which he was head, he was a Sakyapa, technically speaking, but he was generally regarded as a leading Nyingmapa lama; though at the same time he was acknowledged to be an expert and an authority on all forms of Buddhism and all schools of Buddhism, so he was a truly ecumenical figure. As regards my own connections, I have given this some thought, and I think I have carried the same process a step further. I think, in the FWBO, we carry the same process a step further; because the Rimed movement was limited to the schools of Tibetan Buddhism, but we don't limit ourselves to the schools of Tibetan Buddhism; we take the whole of the Buddhist tradition. We regard ourselves, so to speak, as heirs to the whole Buddhist tradition, to all the scriptures and all the commentaries and all the schools of philosophy. But there is nonetheless a difference, I think, between Jamyang Khyentse's attitude and my own, at least in some respects, because they kept the lineages distinct, so that all the lamas in that movement ended up being in possession of hundreds and hundreds of lineages. This is not really very practicable, because you don't actually have a need, personally, for all those hundreds and hundreds of lineages; you can't possibly practise all the different methods and exercises and visualizations and so on, contained in all those hundreds and hundreds of lineages. So, in a sense, what is the point of having them, if you are not going to practise them? And how can you even pass them on if you haven't practised them? [12] So, in the FWBO, though we regard ourselves as heirs to the whole Buddhist tradition, we select, if that is the right term, for practice those aspects or those elements of the total Buddhist tradition which are helpful to us personally in our spiritual development. We try them and we test them, and we take up especially those elements or those teachings, those

practices, which we do find actually help us. So we also could say that we are a Rimed movement, though in a slightly different sense from the original Tibetan Rimed movement. We also see no barriers between one tradition and another. We also do not believe that if you practise something coming from Zen you cannot practise something from Theravada because there is an insuperable barrier between them. We do not see things in this way at all. We see them as all part of the Buddhist tradition, all ultimately going back to the Buddha himself at least by way of inspiration, ultimate spiritual inspiration. So we do not feel any need to confine ourselves to any one particular school or tradition or lineage or succession or any such thing. So, in a way, we represent a synthesis of those elements in the total Buddhist tradition which are of value to us here and now. That does not exclude the possibility of other syntheses by other people in other places and even at other times.

Gerry: This question comes from the beginning of the chapter, the verse of dedication, the last two lines. It says: 'In relying on Mi.la.ras.pa's and Atisa's grace, I write for the benefit of myself and others /This Jewel of the Noble Doctrine which is like the Wish-Fulfilling Gem.' In our group, we had a discussion on grace, and I remember myself you talking about the guru's grace on a few occasions; and correct me if I am wrong you described it roughly as being a product of the guru's spiritual power and the disciple's faith and receptivity. I was wondering whether you could elaborate on that theme, with particular reference to the private ordination, i.e.

S: I think that the word 'grace' is perhaps a rather unfortunate word, because it comes to us primarily from Christianity with all sorts of connotations and associations. I think I prefer to substitute the word 'inspiration'; even 'influence', if 'influence' was not such a weak word, so perhaps we have to fall back on 'inspiration'. In Pali there is a word *anubhava*, which could be translated as 'inspiration'. In Pali one speaks of the *anubhava* of the Buddha, the *anubhava* of the Dharma, the *anubhava* of the Sangha; that is to say, the influence or the inspiration emanating from them, or the inspiration that they give. So that when Gampopa says: 'In relying on Milarepa's and Atisa's grace,' if we translate that as 'In relying on Milarepa's and Atisa's inspiration,' perhaps it gives a truer flavour of what Gampopa is actually talking about. Because we can very easily think of their teachings being inspiring, just as we can think of Shelley as being inspiring, or Keats as being inspiring. It doesn't have any sort of theological overtones. There is something communicated from them to us, usually through an intermediary: in the case of the poet, through the intermediary of the poems which they have left; in the case of Milarepa and Atisa, presumably, through their teachings. The teachings are not just words and not just ideas; they move us, they have a certain effect on us, even though the authors are in a sense dead, they continue to inspire us. So I think if we think in those terms that may be more helpful than invoking the word 'grace', with its very heavy theological overtones. Does that answer the question, or not?

Gerry: I think it opens it out quite a lot. As I say, I thought that ... inspiration somehow involves a relationship between the guru and the disciple.

S: Well, there must be two parties to the inspiration; just as when you read Shelley, in a sense the inspiration is there, though not as an entity, but you have [13] to be receptive as you read. If you read Shelley without receptivity, without understanding, you will not be inspired, you will get nothing from it. So, in the same way, you have to be receptive to the words of Milarepa, receptive to the words of Atisa. If you are, well, there is something in them, so to speak, something in those words, in those teachings, which will inspire you.

Gerry: Does it not go beyond that, inasmuch as you were talking earlier on about lineages?

S: Well, in a sense, perhaps, it does, because I have spoken of an intermediary. In the case of the poet it is the poem; in the case of Atisa and Milarepa, it is the teaching. But can there be an inspiration in the absence of the word? Can there be inspiration in the absence of the teaching, as something existing in a verbal form? According to Buddhism, yes, because Buddhism would say, probably, that the source of Milarepa's inspiration (as we call it from our point of view), the source of the inspiration that comes from Milarepa was not exhausted by his songs; it is not tied down to his songs; it is sort of at loose in the universe, and quite independently of reading his songs, we can tune in to that. Though probably reading the songs is a very good preparation for tuning in to that inspiration that we can feel coming from Milarepa still independently of the songs. This would be, I think, the position of the Mahayana and the Vajrayana. But it probably would be unwise to try to derive inspiration from Milarepa directly, ignoring his songs; I think we would have to steep ourselves in the songs, saturate ourselves with the songs, and in that way sort of tune into the spirit of Milarepa, and then, perhaps, independently of the songs we would be able to receive inspiration from the source of the songs, namely from Milarepa himself as he exists, according, I believe, to one of the songs, in the Akanistha(?) heaven.

Gerry: I was thinking of the relationship of Milarepa with his two main disciples, Rechungpa and Gampopa, and it seems to me that Rechungpa spent an awful lot more time with Milarepa than, say, Gampopa did; so

S: Gampopa was a very good disciple; Rechungpa was not a very good disciple, and needed much more attention from Milarepa. No doubt they both ended up in the same way; they both ended up virtually Enlightened, but I think Rechungpa, according to the songs themselves, did give Milarepa quite a bit more trouble than Gampopa. Gampopa seems to have been quite an ideal disciple; Rechungpa was a lot of fun, but he was not an ideal disciple! But no doubt he had a streak of spiritual sincerity in him which was the redeeming factor, and which saved him in the end in spite of all his escapades and despite all his strays from the path.

: This is a question more to do with the WBO. I have heard it said of you that once somebody had become an Order Member you felt that that meant it was for their whole life, whether that person resigned or not. Could you say a little about that?

S: Well, clearly, this is something that involves two people. So when two people enter into any sort of contract or engagement, the fact that one withdraws from that or is not true to that does not necessarily mean that the other will withdraw from that, or be untrue to that; because, so far as he is concerned, the reasons for which the original contract was entered into continue to exist. In other words, to give a very ordinary example, an ordinary illustration: supposing you get married. The fact that your wife is unfaithful to you does not mean that you are necessarily going to be unfaithful to her (laughter) if, to begin with, you understood that the relationship was for good. If you did not start with that intention, of course, the question is otherwise; but if you start with that intention, the fact that the other partner to the engagement does not live up to its conditions does not mean that you are not going to live up to them. Of course, one must not push the illustration too far; there are obvious differences.

[14]

: But if you both didn't live up to the commitment, then it would actually fall apart or

disintegrate.

S: That would in a way be more unfortunate than ever, because that kind of commitment shouldn't be entered into unless at least one of the two parties is able not to fall away from that under any circumstances. This is where it doesn't quite resemble marriage! Marriages sometimes fall apart despite the whole power of the Catholic church trying to prop them up, the Pope himself doing his best, manfully; none the less, it doesn't always succeed.

Dhammarati: This is about ... Milarepa's explanation ... I ... understand it and ask an intelligible question about it, but you say that it was some kind of influence that as it were comes from Milarepa as distinct from the influence that as it were still ... the universe from Sakyamuni as distinct from as it were the influence that still was in the universe from Shantideva this sort of definite influence, these definite characters ... (?)

S: Well, yes and no. (Laughter.) It is like one of these crystal balls with so many facets. To the extent that, let us say, the Buddha Sakyamuni, Milarepa, Atisa, were all Enlightened and let us say for the sake of argument at least that they were all equally Enlightened it does not matter who you derive or think you derive inspiration from. It may be that the external form of Sakyamuni, or Milarepa, appeals to you more; therefore you direct your attention to that aspect or that facet of the crystal. But to the extent that they are all one in as it were their essence, it does not matter which particular personality you direct your attention to, so long as it is actually an Enlightened personality.

Dhammarati: Is it then a partial perception that sees an apparent distinction in the quality of inspiration, or is there something relatively objective as it were in the influence that is affecting us?

S: Well, you see the light, as it were, of Enlightenment through a number of veils, through a number of as it were thick veils. So that being the case, you don't, by the very nature of your perception, see very clearly, and perhaps there are veils of different kinds, even veils of different colours and so on. Or is that slightly beside the point of the question?

Dhammarati: Yes. (Laughter.)

S: In some cases the veil may be as it were of a historical nature, because say the Buddha manifests what is traditionally called the nirmanakaya, we see the Buddha's Enlightenment under the veil of historicity. In the case, say, of Manjughosha there is no question of historicity; we see in his case the Enlightenment experience through the veil, perhaps the slightly more diaphanous veil, of the archetypal plane. Nonetheless, we see through a veil until we are Enlightened ourselves. Even this is, of course, metaphorical language, and again not to be taken literally or made the basis of any philosophical conclusion in a logical sense.

Lalitaratna: A small point. [On p.xvi we see that] Guenther sees prajna and jnana as different in that he says: 'Prajna represents a station on the path to jnana.' He then goes on to say what they were. In the Survey you

S: Yes, it is a difference of context. In the case of the Mahayana there are 10 Bodhisattva bhumis, there are 10 paramitas. What is the sixth paramita? It is prajna. And what is the tenth paramita? That is jnana. So if you regard the series of 10 bhumis as progressive and they are

clearly presented as progressive you must regard jnana as superior to prajna. In the Hinayana, prajna represents [15] the highest stage; we have sila, samadhi, prajna but not in the Mahayana, inasmuch as prajna represents only the tenth paramita. So if you take all 10 paramitas into consideration you have to draw a distinction between prajna and jnana, which I think I have done, actually, in the Survey. But you have to do that only, of course, within the context of the Mahayana. You are quite justified, if you so wish, in using the word prajna to cover whatever is meant by jnana, if you so wish. But if you want two different terms for the paramita which you practise in the sixth stage and the paramita which you practise in the tenth stage, then no doubt you would be wise to use the terms prajna and jnana. Guenther is basing himself on a distinction of that sort, because he is writing about the Mahayana, he is writing about a Mahayana text; so he takes prajna as representing a degree of Insight considerably lower than that represented by the term jnana. It is a question of understanding in what particular context a particular term occurs.

Vessantara: There is one more question, from Murray.

Murray: This refers to p.3, paragraph 5, and is to do with the various families the Cutoff family, the Dubious family etc. The question is: what relation, if any, do [those] five families have with the families of the five Dhyani Buddhas?

S: They don't have any connection. It is speaking of the existence of the families in that particular version, Uttara Tantra, [and refers to] the five Buddha families, but it is not Buddha families in the sense of the Dhyani Buddhas, so to speak. It is these five families: the Cutoff family, and so on. What is the question?

Murray: I was just asking do those families have any connection with the Dhyani Buddhas?

S: Not really, because there is a family of followers of the Mahayana way of life, so the five Buddha families in the Vajrayana sense could have some connection there, but certainly not with the other Buddha families mentioned here. The Cutoff family are those who have as it were no potential, in a sense, for Enlightenment. The Yogacara school appeared or, at least, some Yogacarins appeared to believe that there were some people who actually never would attain Enlightenment. But later that belief was modified. The Dubious family are those who are well, not so much dubious as indeterminate: they could go any way, they could as it were join this family or they could join that family, and progress accordingly. Then the Sravaka family, those who aim at Enlightenment for self alone; the Pratyekabuddha family, those who aim at Enlightenment for self alone without the help of a teacher; and the family followers of the Mahayana way of life, the Buddha or Bodhisattva family. So beings are subsumed under these five families as belonging to Buddha families. In other words, this is a classification as it were of approaches to Buddhahood; or a classification, so to speak, of spiritual ideals. Your spiritual family is determined by the nature of your spiritual ideal; whether, for instance, individualistic as it were or altruistic as it were. You could say that there was an indirect connection, at least in principle, with the five other Buddha families, because there also your spiritual direction is determined, not exactly by the nature of the spiritual ideal but by the as it were colour of the spiritual ideal, using the word colour metaphorically as well as literally, or even the particular skandha or element you are interested in piercing through; the particular jnana, out of the four or five jnanas, that you are especially interested in realizing. So there is, you could say, a broad sort of connection in principle, even though there is not any sort of historical connection between the two. After all, inasmuch as both [sets of] families constitute

part of Buddhist tradition [16] and Buddhist teaching, there must be some connection between them, however remote. I think one has to assume that that, if anything is truly in a Buddhist teaching, it has connections, however remote, with all other Buddhist teachings, and with a little thought and reflection, not to say meditation, you can find out those connections. There is no need to ask Bhante at all, really! If you have got one thread of the net you can find your way to all the other threads that make up the net. You have as it were to keep pulling. So is that really all?

Vessantara: That is all I have got on my list.

S: That was 13 questions. It didn't seem as many as that. All right; that's not a bad start to the series.

Voices: Thank you.

[17]

Tape 2, Side 1

Bram: Bhante, yesterday you said that when we are studying Buddhist texts we should be aware of the metaphorical quality of those texts, and not always try to take them literally

Sangharakshita: Yes, be aware of the metaphorical nature of the texts where they are metaphorical.

Bram: My question is: is the Western reader more literal-minded than the Eastern reader, or can your warning be applied to both Western and Eastern readers?

S: I think that is very difficult to say, because 'Eastern' is a very broad term, and 'Western' is a very broad term. I am not so sure that Eastern readers are more literal-minded than Western readers, or that Western readers are more literal-minded than Eastern readers. I do remember, though, one strange instance I encountered some years ago, when I was on pilgrimage and I met some Buddhists on pilgrimage from Sri Lanka. They were peasants, and through the bhikkhus who were with them I came to understand that they believed that the Buddha quite literally was 18 feet tall! They were perhaps rather literal-minded! So I don't really know whether people in the West or people in the East are more literal-minded; but I certainly have noticed that, within the FWBO itself, there is or there has been a certain amount of literal-mindedness, and this is why I have spoken on this subject and warned people against literal-mindedness from time to time. I think it perhaps depends more on the level of general intellectual sophistication than on whether one comes from the East or from the West.

Hugh: Could you say more about the word 'genius' in the Roman sense as distinct from the more eighteenth century development of the word, and perhaps elaborate on your application of it to Vajrapani in the Pali scriptures?

S.: I think one probably needs to consult the dictionary here: first, no doubt, the Latin and then the English. I don't know that we have a Latin dictionary on the premises. But I don't think I can say really very much more than I said yesterday, because, yes, the genius is a man's as it were guardian angel, his tutelary deity, his presiding spirit, his guide, if you like, his inspirer, his higher self, even. So when one encounters in the Pali Buddhist literature the

figure of Vajrapani standing in the relation to the Buddha that he is depicted as standing, then one cannot help thinking, one cannot help feeling, that he embodies an aspect of the Buddha himself, and that he can be thought of, so to speak, as the Buddha's genius again, not taking that too literally! Perhaps one needs really to look not just at the Latin dictionary but even at a book on Roman religion, and go perhaps a little more deeply into the whole question of the meaning that the term 'genius' had for the old Roman religion; perhaps even in preclassical times.

Bram: Yesterday you mentioned that, in the act of ordination, two people start a relationship with each other for life, and that particularly in this sort of relationship at least one of them has to be absolutely sure about his ability to keep faithful to that relationship. My question is: in so far as Going for Refuge is a step which goes beyond life and death, doesn't this relationship go beyond life and death as well? Can you say something about the character of this relationship beyond life and death as far as you are concerned?

[18]

S.: Well, I suppose, in principle, the relationship does not differ beyond life and death from what it is in life and death, one might say, because it is a relationship of fidelity, one might say, perhaps, in almost the highest sense. If one is aware of something in oneself which transcends life and death, or which transcends birth and death to use the more Buddhistic expression then one will be aware within oneself of the fact that one's commitment, whether to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha or to another person, also does transcend birth and death. Or were you looking at it from a somewhat different point of view?

Bram: I think your ...

S.: Perhaps I can mention in this connection that, as far as I remember, according to the Abhidharma I think the Abhidharma of the Sarvastivadins one's Going for Refuge, one's commitment to the Three Jewels, persisted beyond death, but that one's taking of the Precepts did not; the Precepts needed to be renewed, but not necessarily the Going for Refuge. I can't remember the reasons that were given for that, if any reasons were given at all. I imagine that it was something to do with one's psychophysical equipment, by virtue of which one was able to observe, and therefore meaningfully to take, the Precepts or not; but the Refuges one could take regardless.

Murray: You say that it is a relationship of fidelity, transcending birth and death. I don't understand that. Does that mean that, between teacher and disciple, beyond death the two subtle bodies as it were ... the spiritual practice ...

S.: No, the question was asked originally only from the point of view, as it were, of one of the two parties involved: that is to say, the one who was capable of making a commitment of that sort. But if one believes in rebirth at all and presumably one needs to believe in rebirth in order to be able to believe that such a commitment transcends birth and death if one believes in rebirth at all then also one necessarily recognizes that there are some acts, let us say, some commitments in this case, which so deeply imbue one's psychophysical continuum, let us say, that they persist beyond physical death as part and parcel, so to speak, of that continuum.

Vessantara: Murray mentioned subtle bodies. Buddhadasa had a question on this ...

Buddhadasa: Could you please explain any differences which may exist between manomayakaya, which Guenther translates as 'essentially mental body', the subtle body or angelic body, and what some people call the astral body?

S.: I am afraid there is a very great confusion of terminology here. You have a strictly Buddhist terminology, which is not always consistent; you also have a sort of popularized semi-theosophical terminology, which is consistent within itself but which is not necessarily consistent with Buddhist terminology or even with other terminologies that enter into this sort of discussion. The manomayakaya is literally 'the body made of mind'. This can be translated as 'subtle body', which will then correspond to the Hindu or Vedantic suksmasarira, which means literally that subtle body; it is a term which the Theosophists also use. The subtle body is, so to speak, that in which one performs various so-called supernormal feats, and it is the subtle body which after death and, of course, it is an ever-changing subtle body progresses through the bardo, and which in a sense is reborn. One can distinguish between this manomayakaya as a subtle body and the astral body inasmuch as the astral body is a subtle counterpart of the physical body, and corresponds to it, but is not so subtle as the manomayakaya. The difference between the astral body and the manomayakaya, the subtle body, is accepting this terminology that the astral body, though it survives death, does [19] not survive it for very long; it disintegrates in much the same way as the physical body does, but disintegrates more slowly; whereas the subtle body, being a purely mental body, does not disintegrate in the same way. That is the principal, that is the real, difference, regardless of nomenclature. In other words, all these traditions seem to posit a gross physical body, a subtle physical body, and a mental body, in association; all of them changing all the time, but the first two subject to disintegration, the last not subject to disintegration until, apparently, Enlightenment itself is attained.

Vessantara: Is there a Buddhist term for what the Theosophists would call the astral body?

S.: Sometimes manomayakaya is understood in that sense, and sometimes what I have called the manomayakaya is called the vijnana again vijnana in a certain sense; sometimes the patisativijnana(?), the relinking of consciousness. As I said at the beginning, there is a great terminological confusion here. I would like, if I can get round to it, to sort it out some time.

Vessantara: The idea that the astral body is the body which comes apart shortly after death is that a Theosophical idea, or is it also found in Buddhism?

S.: This is also found in Buddhism. This is sometimes called 'the body of desire'.

Vessantara: What tradition would talk of this?

S.: The Tibetans discuss these things quite a lot. I have not read much Tibetan Buddhist literature of this kind, but I believe that there is a book on the subject I can't remember the title published fairly recently by is it called After Death States, or something like that?

: Lati Rimpoche.

S.: Lati Rimpoche, yes; he discusses these things to some extent. But I remember having various conversations with Dhardo Rimpoche on them, and he seemed very familiar with these sort of teachings. But I don't think we have many texts translated from the Tibetan

dealing with these things, as yet. I also suspect though it is only a suspicion that a lot of standard Tibetan teaching on the subject derives, in fact, from the Abhidharmakosa, which is, of course, available in Tibetan.

Vessantara: What effect would visualization practice have on the astral body and the subtle body?

S.: I suppose the question basically is: what effect does meditation as such have on the subtle body? Obviously, it will make it more subtle; it will become imbued to use the term I used before with qualities pertaining to or connected with whatever is the subject of the visualization, and therefore, no doubt, will be able to record them or to support the experience of them more easily in the bardo.

Dharmadhara: In the positive counterparts of the first three Precepts, when we talk about purifying the body, are we just restricting that to the physical body, r

S.: Yes, inasmuch as these are ethical precepts we are speaking of the physical body. But, obviously, the other bodies have to be purified too.

Pavel: ... to purify one's body by being generous and so on?

[20]

S.: It is with the physical body that one performs those actions. It is not that the physical body itself, literally, is either pure or impure in the ethical sense,

because the body is only an instrument; so one might therefore say that, metaphorically speaking, one purifies one's body in that way. But, essentially, it is the mental state that is pure or not pure.

Pavel: So what is referred to, then, by 'I purify my body', 'I purify my mind'?

S.: Well, when you say you purify the mind, the mind is purified directly. When you say you purify the body, the mind is purified indirectly. But, of course, in a sense one could say, if one wanted to go into it more deeply, that the body, even in the literal sense, is purified; because it is not that the body is altogether divorced from sentience and therefore from consciousness. It is as though one's consciousness imbues and informs the body too at least in a manner of speaking. Your body is you, it is not just an instrument in the way that a knife or a hammer is.

Vessantara: We now come on to some questions concerning the Tathagatagarbha doctrine, starting with Wayne.

Wayne: What do you think were the conditions which gave rise to the Tathagata garbha doctrine?

S.: I don't think we know. The fact is we know very, very little of the historical and cultural context of the development of Buddhism. I touched upon this not so very long ago in a study group. I think someone asked where information was available about the cultural and historical background of the development of Buddhism, but, as I said, there is very little information of this sort available at all. Indian history, it is well known, consists largely of

gaps and that applies to the history of Buddhism in India, too. It is remarkable that, when one takes up Tibetan Buddhism, or when one goes, say, to Chinese Buddhism, at once darkness, historically speaking, gives way to light. Many, many of the dates of Indian Buddhist history are established only from Chinese and Tibetan sources, which is really quite extraordinary. It is as though the Indians, including the Indian Buddhists, had hardly any historical sense at all. I made the point recently I forget in what connection but talking about St Jerome, that St Jerome appears to have been an almost exact contemporary of Nagarjuna, but even to link the two names in that way is absurd, in a sense, because St Jerome is a fully historical character. We know an awful lot about him. We have many, many letters from him and to him. We can follow the course of his career, not only year by year, not only week by week, but day by day, because his letters were dated! So we know exactly where he was, usually, on a certain day and exactly what he was doing; we can follow the whole course of his history. But Nagarjuna, who lived at almost exactly the same time, in comparison is an utterly vague and shadowy, even legendary, figure. Scholars are not exactly certain of his dates well, by no means certain of his dates: when he was born, when he died. There are all sorts of legends about him living for 600 years. Modern Western scholars think that there has been a confusion between two different Nagarjunas, possibly three. We are not even sure whether he lived and taught in south India or somewhere else. We don't know whether he was connected or was on friendly terms with this king or with that. We are not even sure what exactly he wrote. We certainly do not know anything whatever of his day-to-day life; whereas we know all about St Jerome's household, and all the little difficulties and troubles he had, even. We have a full report of them all. But in the case of Nagarjuna we have absolutely no information as to the circumstances under which he wrote his works. In some cases we are not even sure what are his works. There is a discussion going on among scholars at the moment as to whether he is in fact the author of the Prajnaparamita Sastra translated into Chinese; some think that he is the author, some [21] that he is not, and some that he only wrote the first part, or other parts, and so on; it is the usual story. So there is this lack of history. It is very difficult to get to grips with the development of Indian Buddhism, from a historical and cultural point of view. Though Western scholars, and Indian scholars too, it must be admitted, are gradually piecing together just a bit of information; gradually some of the gaps are being filled in. But there are quite a lot of very big gaps still left. So what was your question? (laughter).

Wayne: What do you think were the conditions which gave rise to the Tathagatagarbha doctrine?

S.: Ah. It is really impossible to say. I can't remember seeing anything or reading anything that might give an explanation. Some scholars would posit an influence coming from, say, the Vedanta. I would be very unwilling to think in those terms, because I do not like to think in terms, with regard to Buddhism, of external influences of that sort. I think we have to see Buddhism as developing, from a spiritual point of view, out of its own inner resources; though, obviously, it may well have had recourse to modes of expression derived from its immediate cultural context, immediate historical environment, and so on. But no, I am afraid I can't help here at all though it may well be that scholars are at this very moment at work on the problem. Perhaps one can see a certain philosophical sequence in the development of this doctrine, but one cannot see, as far as I know, any cultural and historical factors that might have been responsible for it.

Hugh: Would you say something about the relationship between the Tathatagarbha and the arising of the Bodhicitta?

S.: These are two rather different things. I have an idea I might have referred to this difference in the Survey somewhere. I think the point of the difference is, very broadly speaking, and using Western terms which in a sense do not really apply to Buddhism one might say that the concept of Tathagatagarbha was metaphysical, whereas the concept of Bodhicitta was psychological. I think that, using Western terms, probably correctly summarizes the difference between the two. Perhaps you could look up the references in the Survey and see what I have said there. I do have a vague idea that I have said something about the difference between the two in the Survey, though it could be that my memory is playing tricks with me and I have said it actually somewhere else!

Prasannasiddhi: You did say it in the Survey.

S.: I did? Good.

Prasannasiddhi: Yes, [in the] chapter on the arising of the Bodhicitta there is one paragraph.

Mark: Is there a connection between the Tathagatagarbha and the Mahayana idea of Buddha seeds, where different sentient beings have different numbers of Buddha seeds, and thus a greater or lesser potential for achieving Enlightenment?

S.: Yes and no, because it is as though the conception of Buddha seeds which, as far as I remember, is a predominantly Chinese Buddhist conception as it were quantifies the Tathagatagarbha, if you see what I mean. According to the Tathagatagarbha Sutras, the garbha is present equally in all beings, with the possible exception, of course, of the ajantakas, the Cut-Off family. But in the case of the Buddha seeds, in the case of the different classes of beings gods, men, animals and so on there is a different quantity of Buddha seeds [in each [22] class]. Now one can either take that literally or one can take it metaphorically. If one takes it literally, then there is a sort of quantitative difference, not only as between the Buddha seeds in the human state and the Buddha seeds in the animal state and so on, but also between the Buddha seeds in those five or six states and the Tathagatagarbha itself. But if one takes this idea of seeds more metaphorically, less literally, one can say that it represents the fact that the Tathagatagarbha, which is present equally in all forms of life, all classes of existence, is more or less easily accessible from this or that class of beings. The fact that there is a smaller number of seeds represents the fact that it is accessible with greater difficulty from that particular state or condition. The fact that there is a greater number of seeds represents the fact that it is accessible, realizable, with less difficulty from that particular state or condition.

Dhammarati: Reading the seminar transcript, Bhante, one thing that strikes me about your explanations is how, where it is useful, you seem happy to drop traditional ways of explaining Buddhist experiences and [instead], very simply and very directly, and from your own experience, describe what is meant. There seems to be a contrast between that and what Gampopa does. He seems to be determined by the concepts of his tradition, and as a result he takes a very complicated way of saying something that you say more simply. Is there value in this very scholastic way in which Gampopa tries to explain experience, or does his language distort the experience he is trying to convey? Someone in our group wondered whether, for instance, in the material dealing with the Tathagatagarbha, Gampopa was speaking from Insight or whether he was speculating.

S.: So what is the question?

Dhammarati: First, is there a value in [Gampopa's] mode of explanation? Secondly, is Gampopa speaking from experience or is he speculating?

S.: If one takes seriously what Guenther says in his introduction about Gampopa, presumably Gampopa is speaking from his own experience. But he is certainly speaking even if from his own experience in a different kind of way, or at least in a particular kind of way. Milarepa also speaks from his own experience, and Milarepa is, of course, Gampopa's teacher. But Milarepa speaks in one way and Gampopa speaks in another; Milarepa sings songs, he doesn't quote sutras, whereas Gampopa writes a systematic sort of manual, and he does quote sutras. If one is to study the Dharma systematically from an intellectual point of view, one does need texts like Gampopa's. They are indeed very useful. They help to systematize one's knowledge. They help to clarify it. They help to fill up gaps and tidy up loose ends. But, of course, from time to time, manuals and textbooks need to be rewritten, and perhaps there is a case for somebody doing that some time. Gampopa's work certainly was not the last word on the subject not, for instance, for the Gelugpas, because along came Tsongkhapa and wrote his Lam Rim ..., the Great Stages of the Path, which, so far as the Gelugpas were concerned, mostly superseded the work of Gampopa. For the Theravadins, there is a work which is of that same type or class, which is of course the Visuddhimagga, which describes the great stages of the Path in terms of sila, samadhi, prajna, and in terms of the seven stages of purification. We have also got systematic treatments of the Noble Eightfold Path. So no doubt, from time to time, we do need, at least for a certain class of people those who appreciate and can benefit from a systematic intellectual approach these sort of manuals, these sort of textbooks; but they do need, at the same time, to be revised or even rewritten completely from time to time, because all sorts of questions that occur to a modern, certainly a Western, Buddhist don't seem to occur, even, to Gampopa, but they need at the same time to be discussed; they need to be examined; they [23] need to be looked into. As regards what I myself have done, of course in the Survey I have quoted texts I have quoted quite a number of texts; maybe that is one of the features of the work but now, 30odd years later, I feel that the Survey really needs not exactly updating, it's more a question of a more thoroughgoing restatement. When I wrote the Survey I was concerned mainly to clarify the traditional teaching in traditional terms. I had recourse very, very little to modern, let us say philosophical, conceptions modern, let us say psychological, terminology, and so on. It was a very traditional work. Though at the same time, here and there, there were the beginnings of a sort of reworking of that whole material. So I have continued that process, not in any literary form, but as it were verbally [orally?] that is to say, by way of study seminars, question and answer sessions, and so on. So, in a way, my writings, especially the writings that I produced in India, do not fully represent my point of view at all. They represent my point of view to a certain extent, but since writing those works I have gone much more deeply into the subjects which the works themselves discussed, and I have also looked at those same subjects from several different new points of view. So if anybody wants to know what I think or what I feel about certain important aspects of Buddhism, it is not enough to familiarize themselves with my writings the Survey, The Three Jewels and so on but also to see what I have said in the course of later lectures, in the course of study seminars, in the course of question and answer sessions. And at Padmaloka currently, or rather in Norwich currently, all of this oral material is being collated and classified.

: Oh!

S.: Oh yes, it is being done originally in connection with Mitrata, but the team of women Order Members and Mitras there have got on with this very well, the work is well under way; because they need, for the sake of the Mitrata extracts, to be able to lay their hands on, say, what Bhante has said on, for instance, the Bodhicitta, or what he has said about virya, or what he has said about Buddhism and Nietzsche or Buddhism and Hegel, almost at a moment's notice. So, gradually, all this material is getting analysed, classified, collated, and so on. But, clearly, it would be better if I could get around to writing something sooner or later of a still more systematic kind not only still more systematic, but going over all this material again in an even more thoroughgoing fashion; in a sense eliminating everything that is merely traditional, in the sense of not though traditional still relevant to us here and now. Whether I will ever get around to doing that, I cannot say. I think the likelihood is I will not have time to do it. But there is no reason why it should not be done, in different ways, from different points of view, by Order Members. Subhuti has reduced a lot of that kind of material to some sort of order in his forthcoming book, where he deals with 'A Vision of Existence', that is to say, deals with the circle, the Round, deals with the Spiral, deals with the Mandala of the Five Buddhas, and so on. He deals, in other words, with my own much more thoroughgoing systematization of some very important aspects or sections of Buddhist thought. So it may well be that this kind of work will be undertaken by Order Members, but there is a growing body of material which is available and within which I think most, or many at least, of the most important questions, are dealt with rather more thoroughly than I was able to do in the Survey or The Three Jewels and so on. Nonetheless, the Survey and The Three Jewels remain indispensable reading, because they provide the principal points of contact, the principal connections, with tradition.

Dhammarati: Just one final point Gampopa's language, then, is appropriate to the circumstances in which he is teaching rather than a limitation?

[24]

S.: Well, yes and no. I don't think that there is anything that Gampopa says with which we can dispense, but I think in many cases it needs to be put very differently, in a very different sort of language. Otherwise, one is constantly having as it were to translate things, and especially when one is dealing with beginners say, in a beginners' class it can be almost confusing. In fact, if you possibly can, it is probably better in a beginners' class to give the class the benefit, the gist, of your own readingcumexperiencecumunderstanding of whatever it is you are talking about; not going into this quotation and that quotation from the sutras, unless it is immediately relevant and illuminating, and not saying, 'The Theravada said that, but then the Hinayana developed it into something else, and then the Mahayana had to react to it in such-and-such a way, and that's why we believe in so-and-so!' You don't really need to trouble the beginner with all that sort of information. You just give him the end result, the gist of the matter, as currently understood and practised in the FWBO. He can learn all those historical details later, if he is interested in that sort of thing. And certainly some people within the Order need to know all these things, so that we can make our position clear vis a vis the Buddhist tradition itself, especially if we are challenged at any time by followers of traditional Buddhism in this or that form. Someone whom Lokamitra met a very scholarly German Buddhist whom I knew also years and years ago tried to take Lokamitra to task, saying that nowhere in the Buddhist scriptures were the dasakusala dhamma referred to as silas, but Lokamitra was able to put him right immediately! And again, I remember when I was in India last, and Dharmacaris started being called Dharmacaris, somebody objected that the dasakusala dhamma were not found in the Pali Buddhist scriptures; whereas they are

found in dozens of places. But one has to be able to point that out; otherwise, if you don't know, and someone accuses you of inventing the Ten Precepts, what can you say unless you know the facts? So at least someone in the Order needs to know the facts, so that if someone allegedly representing traditional Buddhism asks these sort of questions or brings these sort of charges, you do know what to say; you can say with confidence that, yes, the dasakusala dhamma are found in the Pali scriptures, are found in the Mahavastu, are found in the Mahayana sutras, here, and there, and there; and you can immediately give the references. Or if you speak in terms of the twelve positive nidanas, you might they are so unknown in the Buddhist world be accused of having invented them, so you need to be able to refer to the Buddha's own words as recorded in the Samyutta Nikaya, for instance, of the Pali Canon.

Dhammarati: So which Order Members can remember all these things?

S.: Shall I tell you? Well, the nearest, I think, is probably Padmavajra. He has got a pretty good general knowledge. And Subhuti has too, and a few others. Anyway.

Barry: On p.3, para.3, it says beings 'are endowed with Buddha-nature since in the Tathata of Buddhas and of sentient beings there is no differentiation into good or bad, great or small, [25] high or low.' Could you explain why this is so?

S.: This means that beings I'll just read from the beginning of the paragraph: 'It has further been stated There are no differentiations in the very nature of things which is Tathata. Tathata is a synonym, in a way, for sunyata; it is a synonym with a somewhat more positive connotation, one may say. Tathata is sometimes translated as 'thusness'. It is akin to the word Tathagata, sometimes translated, as by Suzuki, as 'suchness', and it figures very prominently in The Awakening of Faith. So, yes, it is, broadly speaking, a synonym for sunyata. 'This means that beings are endowed with Buddha-nature, since in the Tathata of Buddhas and of sentient beings there is no differentiation into good or bad, great or small, high or low.' Just translating that roughly into simpler language, one might say [that] from the point of view of the relative truth, there are Buddhas and there are unenlightened beings; there are those who are good and there are those who are bad, those who are gods and those who are men. But, from the standpoint of the Ultimate Truth, those distinctions, those differences, belong to the world of

Tape 2, Side 2

relative truth, and therefore to the world of illusion, one might say. In reality, all is Tathata; in reality, all is sunyata; in reality, all are Buddha. This is, of course, in a sense, the language of entities, or rather, just Entity, so it is a rather dangerous language to use. But this is the general sense of the passage. 'This means that beings are endowed with Buddha-nature, since in the Tathata of Buddhas and of sentient beings there is no differentiation into good or bad, great or small, high or low.' In the Zen school, of course, much is made of this sort of teaching, this sort of tradition; but, as we have seen very often in the West, it can be the subject of a great deal of misunderstanding. When it is said, for instance: 'You are Buddha, you are essentially Buddha, you are essentially Enlightened,' the ego, so to speak, can appropriate the concept of Buddhahood for itself, which means that inasmuch as that happens there is no progress made in the direction of the actual realization of Buddhahood. And inasmuch as the ego cannot but, one might say, appropriate, or tend to appropriate, that concept and apply it to itself, it is very dangerous to give it the opportunity of doing so. This

is why I personally prefer to avoid that sort of language altogether. You can say to people: 'Yes, you have greater potentialities than you realize; you can do more than you think you can do.' But I do not think it is advisable to tell people that they are Buddhas. It might merely confuse them. It should confuse them; if it does not confuse them there is something wrong. It means that they are very smug and self-satisfied. If a Zen master tells you that you are a Buddha, your immediate reaction should be of shock, horror and astonishment; that you could not possibly be a Buddha, you know yourself far too well for that! but that you might become a Buddha, after a long time, with a lot of effort you might perhaps begin to admit the possibility of that. That would be more realistic and more honest. But I don't think anybody really can honestly and meaningfully say: 'Yes, I am a Buddha,' not even in theory. You can't even begin to realize what it actually means to say that. So, if a Zen teacher assures you that you are Buddha, you can either take it that he is speaking on a lofty spiritual plane that has got absolutely nothing to do with you at present, or that he just does not really know what he is talking about and that he is not really a Zen master at all (laughter). The chances are about 1,000 to 1 that it is the first.

Ian: Do beings in hell just passively work off karma vipaka, or do they create further karma? If they do create further karma, which presumably would be negative, how do they ever get out of hell?

S.: That is quite a question, isn't it? Because if it is as difficult as that, as it seems to be, to get out of hell, you had better be very, very careful and see that you don't fall into it! But, generally speaking, it is said that the experience of the hell state represents a pure vipaka, it is a pure resultant; that you do not ordinarily succeed in generating any fresh karma, especially not any skilful karma. So you can only wait until the particular vipaka which is represented by the fact that you are in hell is exhausted that is to say until the particular karma that brought about that vipaka is exhausted or if you are as it were, let us say, lucky; because there might be a very remote skilful root which you planted, aeons and aeons ago. If you were 'lucky', you might come in contact with a Bodhisattva, or rather a Bodhisattva might come into contact with you, perhaps not even as the result of any skilful root that you may [26] have planted in the remote past but simply out of his own good nature, out of his compassion, so to speak. I remember there was someone years ago who told me that he had taken a vow to establish a connection with those beings who had no connection with Buddhahood. That meant something of this particular kind. Not to speak of the hell realm in the literal sense, you can sometimes find people who are in a sort of hell state, even in the present existence itself, and who do seem unable to make any effort of their own. Their position, their situation, is so difficult, so painful, they can't do anything, so to speak, off their own bat. They need somebody to come along and take a bit of initiative with them or perhaps a great deal of initiative and gradually coax them out of their negative state. And it can be done. It needs a great deal of patience. I sometimes refer to the case I heard about, I think it was through a Friend: the case of someone who was admitted to a mental hospital and a mental hospital, you could say, in some respects is a sort of hell realm apparently in a state of shock, but in such a state of shock that they were in a sort of catatonic state, almost; they just didn't respond to anybody or anything, ever. But apparently there was a nurse who felt, as it were intuitively, that something could be done. So every day, what this nurse did she just took that person's hand, just like that, and just held it, squeezed it, for half an hour. And she did this every day for half an hour for six months; and nothing happened. But after she had done it every day for six months, she did it just once more, and there was a very slight answering squeeze; and she felt that that was the turning point; she had got a response. So she continued working on this

person, or working with this person, and eventually that person was coaxed back to something like normality. But it takes that sort of patience, and very often you have perhaps to deal not with a catatonic person who has to be coaxed out of a state of non-responsiveness, but someone perhaps in a very pained, even a very angry, a very tormented mental state; this can be very, very difficult for you to deal with. But unless someone has that sort of attitude towards them, unless someone takes that sort of trouble with them, perhaps at least for the time being, at least as regards this life there is not much hope. It does seem, in some ways, rather terrible that nowadays in the world there seem to be so many people who are not able to help themselves, but who could be helped if there was just somebody available to help them. But it is as though the number of those who are in need of help far exceeds the number of those who are available to help and able to help. One needs much more, I suspect, than the average social worker; someone with a much greater spiritual stability and spiritual strength, because sometimes people in our society are in a quite dreadful state of despondency, depression, despair and so on. You need almost a whole army of Bodhisattvas. What about all the people who become alcoholics? There are tens of thousands of them, it seems, in every modern industrialized country; perhaps hundreds of thousands. Who is going to help them? There are bodies like Alcoholics Anonymous, and they do quite a bit of good work, but it goes far beyond what they can do with their limited resources. So it is quite a big problem. Anyway, the general point I want to make is that sometimes people, whether in this life or in some other life, are in the sort of state where they cannot help themselves, but they can be helped by others if those others are able to take the necessary trouble, are imbued with the requisite compassion, to use the Buddhist term. No doubt we all know people who are in a bit of a state, whether within the FWBO or outside, and usually you can do something about it.

Ian: How can it be that someone in a very tormented state is not creating fresh karma by just being in such a bad state?

S.: That may happen, too. You may not be able to make things better, but you can make things worse, sometimes, and perhaps one of the first things that somebody [27] has to do, somebody who comes into contact with you, is to stop you making things worse for yourself. Sometimes you feel so angry, maybe even with yourself, that you go on making things worse for yourself. That is what I have sometimes called a negative spiral: you just go spiralling down instead of spiralling up.

Murray: In reference to the pure karma vipaka of the hell realm, I am still not clear it seems to be quite different terms that a being can get out of the hell realm, which seems to be the situation where he has created fresh karma, positive karma, but at the same time you can be in a hell realm but just expending karma. How can you be only expending karma or accumulated karma? (?)

S.: Well, if one accepts the traditional account of the hells, you have just no scope for any good action. You are being tormented all the time, you are aware only of that torment.

Murray: So that seems to imply that that hell state or heaven state at the other end of the scale are sort of passive states?

S.: That is the traditional view. Of course, one can say that sometimes you have sort of mixed or borderline states or borderline cases; nonetheless, at the same time you can have states of as it were unqualified hell or unqualified heaven.

Murray: I still find it confusing that, even if an individual being acts, those actions don't have consequences, it would seem.

S.: Well, if a being acts, those acts do have consequences; but the point about the hell beings, and about the heavenly beings too, is that they are not in a position to act. It is as though, at least for the time being, they are subject to such suffering that their whole being becomes simply suffering. They merely suffer. Their whole time, their whole being, is taken up just passively with suffering, and they suffer to such an extent that they don't have time, they don't have opportunity, to develop anything genuinely positive.

Murray: So, in a way, there is no volition for the hell being?

S.: There is no positive volition. There is, no doubt, the possibility of a negative volition, because the fact that you are suffering can make you even more angry if you have time even for anger. But there would not seem to be any time, or any scope, or any opportunity, for the development of a positive volition and a positive action. On the other hand, according to Buddhist teaching, the karma that brought you there is limited, therefore the vipaka is limited, and it may be or it will be that after a time the torment starts wearing off, and you may get some respite; and you may then start calling to mind something of a more positive nature, and then start making that the basis of a more positive volition. But, in any case, the vipaka is going to come to an end, eventually, because the karma that gave rise to it is only of a finite nature, and you start seeing the end of it in any case.

Gerry: Following on from that, going back to the earlier point about Buddha seeds: is it not the case that, after the human realm, there are the most Buddha seeds in the hell realm i.e. you have quite a good chance of gaining Enlightenment from the hell realm in comparison to the other realms?

S.: Well, what does one mean [by] 'in the hell realm'? This is what the traditional picture from Chinese Buddhism does represent, but what does one mean by Buddha seeds being in the hell realm? Does it mean that one is in a position immediately to actualize them? Does it mean that, or does it mean perhaps that the fact of [28] your suffering teaches you a good lesson, and therefore provides you with an increased motivation not just for escaping from the hell realm itself but from conditioned existence within which such an experience is possible. So I think you need to look at the phraseology here quite carefully, and not take it as it were that a state of intense suffering is as such a more favourable state for the attainment of Enlightenment. I don't think that is what that particular illustration is meant to convey. But, yes, it may well be that once you have had an experience of intense suffering you are then in a better position to see the limitations of conditioned existence itself, and therefore to make a more decided effort in the direction of Enlightenment, thus actualizing a greater quantity, so to speak, of Buddha seeds.

Murray: In relation to the heaven realm, then, the devalokas, is it actually an advantage to be reborn in the devaloka from the point of view of practising the Dharma, or [would one] be better off to be reborn in the human realm?

S.: The scriptures seem to contain different statements. Often the devas are spoken of as simply enjoying those heavenly states; those states are spoken of as simple vipakas. But also there are passages where devas are represented as listening to the teachings of the Buddha and

making spiritual progress. But here, of course, the teaching of the Buddha, or the fact that the Buddha teaches the devas, represents the intervention of an external factor. But again, on the other hand, there are still other passages in the life of the Buddha, for instance, in the Lalitavistara, [where] the devas are represented, many of them, as taking a very great interest in the Buddha's life, in the Buddha's career, and being constantly at hand and listening to him. So it does seem that there is something of a difference even among devas, and that though normally devas are immersed in their blissful experience it is not impossible in that state to progress spiritually, especially if one happens to encounter a Buddha or Bodhisattva or some higher spiritual being, or if perhaps even one has some higher spiritual awareness left over from a previous existence. Perhaps in the Buddhist scriptures in this respect one has an amalgam of popular traditions and more philosophical teachings, actual spiritual experiences and so on, and they need to be sorted out to some extent.

: It would suggest that if devas have heard the Buddha, at least in certain devalokas the Dharma would be taught.

S.: Well, the Buddha, by virtue of his Buddhahood and his supernormal powers, has so to speak access to all the different realms of mundane existence and is able to communicate with the beings in all those realms if he so wishes. This is why, according to the traditional account of the way in which the Buddha spent his 24 hours, he used to spend the hours before dawn discoursing to the devas, who even came to him to hear his teaching. But if one speaks, as the scriptures do, of them coming to him, that suggests that they are taking some initiative, at least; or perhaps one should not take that too literally. Perhaps it is not a question of them literally coming to him, or even him literally going to them, but he being, as it were, on that occasion, where they were and being able to communicate with them, and them being receptive to him.

Vessantara: Now a question from Prasannasiddhi.

Prasannasiddhi: In the seminar you took on the Jewel Ornament of Liberation, you mentioned that Manjusri is the archetypal Bodhisattva. Could you elaborate on this?

S.: Manjusri is the archetypal Bodhisattva in the sense that he is, as it were, the central Bodhisattva. Usually, when the three Family Protectors are represented [29] together that is to say, Avalokitesvara, Manjusri or Manjughosha, and Vajrapani, Manjughosha is represented in the middle. They are the three Family Protectors inasmuch as they are protectors of the main three out of the five Buddha families. I explained, I think, in one of the lectures in the series on 'The Parables, Myths and Symbols of the White Lotus Sutra' that originally there was, so to speak, just the Buddha, or even, if you like, there was one archetypal Buddha, or even again, if you like, one Sambhogakaya Buddha. But, inasmuch as Buddhahood has different aspects, that one figure split, so to speak, into a number of figures, each figure embodying a particular aspect, with Vairocana embodying Wisdom; perhaps Akshobhya, in a sense, embodying Energy, power; and Amitabha embodying Love. They had their Bodhisattvas: Vairocana had Manjusri, Amitabha had Avalokitesvara, and Akshobhya had Vajrapani. So Manjusri was associated with the central Buddha figure, in a way the undivided Buddha whose two principal aspects Amitabha and Akshobhya were. So Manjusri is the sort of Bodhisattva reflex of the central Buddha, therefore he is the central Bodhisattva especially inasmuch as Wisdom is the central faculty, in a way. Buddhism, in a sense, one might say, is a religion or spiritual tradition of Wisdom; Wisdom is regarded as the highest faculty;

Wisdom, prajnaparamita, is in a way regarded as the goal. So, in that way, inasmuch as he is associated with the central Buddha, and inasmuch as he embodies that central faculty or highest faculty of Wisdom, Manjusri comes to be thought of or spoken of as the central Bodhisattva, the principal archetypal Bodhisattva if you like, the Bodhisattva par excellence.

Prasannasiddhi: I would have thought Avalokitesvara was the Bodhisattva par excellence, because it seems the main thing about the Bodhisattva is that he goes back to the world because he sees the suffering, and therefore Avalokitesvara

S.: Well, in a sense each and every Bodhisattva is the Bodhisattva par excellence. But the question is whether a Bodhisattva is important because he is worshipped by a lot of people, or whether a Bodhisattva is important because of the position he occupies in a particular scheme of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. So Manjusri is the central Bodhisattva because of the central position he occupies in the overall scheme of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and because he represents or embodies the central or highest faculty, namely Wisdom. If one was to speak of Avalokitesvara as the central Bodhisattva, it would only be because he was the most popular Bodhisattva, especially the most popular Bodhisattva in, for instance, Tibet: not because he occupied, technically, the central position within the scheme of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. But in that way, of course, Ksitigarbha can become the central or most important Bodhisattva, as he does for many people in Japan; or Acala can become the central or most important Bodhisattva. But they are not, for that reason, central or most important in the sense of occupying the central position in the total scheme of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas unless from a very special point of view, or with reference to a very special practice. Theoretically, any Buddha or Bodhisattva can occupy the centre of the Mandala, but there is nonetheless a standard scheme, and in accordance with that standard scheme Manjusri is the central figure.

Prasannasiddhi: Could you perhaps say that the essential thing about a Buddha is his Wisdom, and the essential thing about a Bodhisattva is his Compassion?

S.: Not really; not if you regard them as two distinct personalities, in a way. In a way it is artificial, because how can a Buddha not have Compassion, and how can a Bodhisattva not have Wisdom? The two must go together. You can only distinguish the two and allocate Wisdom to the Buddha and Compassion to the Bodhisattva if you regard them as being actually one personality and not two. How are we getting on, by the way?

Vessantara: We've got four more questions. Buddhadasa has a question.

[30]

Buddhadasa: In a sense you have answered something of this question already, but I will ask it anyway. Are there any modern equivalents or psychological types [equivalent] to the traditional categories of sravaka and pratyekabuddha, or do they only exist in the received tradition of Buddhism? Is it useful for us to continue with these classifications?

S.: When I was looking through this text today, it seemed to me that the types represented by, for instance, the pratyekabuddha family are very much with us today. For instance: 'The Pratyekabuddha family are those who in addition to these three characteristics are very arrogant, keep silent about their teachers and like to live alone in solitude.' Well, you do find some Buddhists who are just like that, and you could regard them as belonging to the pratyekabuddha family; not that they were actually pratyekabuddhas, but they were of that

type as it were. Do you see what I mean? But whether we choose to retain that particular nomenclature I think is quite another matter. If one takes the 'buddha' in pratyekabuddha literally, how can one be a Buddha of any kind, whether pratyeka or other ..., and still be very arrogant and keep silent about their teachers? How is it possible for any kind of Buddha to have those characteristics? Therefore, the term pratyekabuddha has ceased to have any real significance within the tradition itself. One could certainly find people corresponding to that tradition, even among our own friends and contacts, perhaps; but they would certainly be very far, to that extent, from any kind of Buddhahood. So I think probably this sort of terminology is just confusing to us nowadays at least, confusing to the newcomer.

Prasannasiddhi: Could you perhaps say that a hermit who gained Enlightenment while away in the hermitage [was a pratyekabuddha]? He would certainly be alone, and he would be silent about his teachers; I don't know about the arrogant part ... relevant.

S.: I think the arrogant part is a very big and very relevant point. But the suggestion is that one keeps silent about one's teachers because one doesn't like to admit any debt, as it were; in other words, one is lacking in gratitude, and that is a quite serious fault, a quite serious drawback. Certainly one can like to live alone in solitude in a quite positive way for quite positive reasons, and can certainly make great spiritual progress by living in solitude; but it is not simply living in solitude that makes one a pratyekabuddha or that causes one to belong to the pratyekabuddha family in the traditional sense. The classical sense [includes] these other characteristics as well.

Prasannasiddhi: So you can speak in terms of attitudes?

S.: Yes, and perhaps dropping the term pratyekabuddha. But there are some people who do have a very arrogant attitude, who like to keep silent about their teachers, about their indebtedness to other Buddhists, and who like to live alone; that could be regarded as representing a type of spiritual aspirant. I don't think there is any great need to tie it up with the classical doctrine of the pratyekabuddha. That doctrine has given rise to a great deal of confusion, I think, in Buddhist circles. Probably, originally, it meant no more than 'wise men', in a very general sense, who just liked to lead a solitary life. I think when the term pratyeka buddha or pacchekabuddha originally came into existence, the term 'buddha' itself had not yet developed its more specialized, distinctively Buddhist, meaning.

: Does that suggest, then, that the word 'buddha' as the title of a wise man, might have been around before Buddhism?

S.: Oh, that is definitely known. In fact, in the Pali texts themselves sometimes the word Buddha is used in the full Buddhistic sense; sometimes it is used very broadly, very loosely indeed, simply to mean a wise man. So in the compound pratyekabuddha, buddha probably just means -

[31]

Prasannasiddhi: 'Solitary hermit'!

S.: 'a wise man', and therefore pratyekabuddha [meant] a wise man, a sage, who liked to live on his own, perhaps in the forest, like the ancient rshis; forest-dwelling hermits or sages. So originally pratyekabuddha did not represent a kind of Buddha in the full Buddhist sense. If

you take it in that sense, a definite contradiction is introduced.

John: I was wondering which, in your experience, of the Buddha families are most prevalent in the West today, and how can this be best ... to the FWBO?

S.: That is quite an interesting question. I think, on the whole, probably the Lotus family is predominant; but it has been interesting to see that the Jewel family has recently been becoming more popular than one would have thought because Ratnasambhava, who is of course the Buddha of the Jewel family, is not a very popular or prominent figure in the East. In the East it is Amitabha who is very prominent and popular; it is Akshobhya who is very prominent and popular; it is Vairocana. But not Amoghasiddhi, and not Ratnasambhava; their cults, if one can use that term, are of very, very minor significance indeed. Nonetheless, within the FWBO or within the Order, I should say Ratnasambhava in recent years has been slowly, it seems, gaining in importance. I think perhaps it is because of his association with beauty, let us say; possibly with the arts. It may be for that reason. But there is no reason why this sort of development should not take place. The Buddhist scriptures mention hundreds and thousands of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; they all represent different aspects of the Supreme Enlightenment experience. So different kinds of people, different classes of people, are attracted to this or that aspect, therefore this or that Buddha or Bodhisattva in accordance with their basic proclivities. So the fact that Amitabha was especially important in, say, Japan does not necessarily mean that Amitabha is going to be especially important in Britain, or in California. It may well be that a comparatively obscure Buddha or Bodhisattva appeals to people in the West, or that a number of different such figures, not so very well known in the East, appeal to people in the West. That would be an entirely legitimate development. For instance, Ksitigarbha was hardly known, in popular terms, in India, but he became very popular in Central Asia, and thereafter in China and in Japan. Similarly with Acala; he is very prominent and popular in Japan, but hardly known outside Japan. So, who knows? We may have all sorts of extraordinary Buddhas and Bodhisattva figures becoming popular in the West. It is interesting and significant how popular the figure of Padmasambhava is in the FWBO generally; he is certainly not popular in Sri Lanka! I don't think he is very prominent in Australia, say, outside the FWBO.

Buddhadasa: For the time being.

S.: For the time being!

Vessantara: Kevin. I am not sure if your question has been dealt with?

Kevin: Bhante, this morning we talked about karma and rebirth. We were wondering whether you were able personally to direct or transfer your consciousness towards your next rebirth, and if so, how does one actually go about it?(Laughter.)

S.: Well, I can tell you how one should not go about it. It is no use leaving it [32] until the last minute! (laughter) because your consciousness, to use that term, at the moment of death, is propelled essentially by all the karmas that you have created throughout your life. If you want to generate a particular thought at the time of death, the safest way, the surest way of doing that is to be generating that particular thought all during your lifetime. Because if you are thinking about something all your life, the chances are that you will also think about it at the time of death. But if you never give it a thought during your life, it is very unlikely that you

will think of it at the time of death; especially if it is a question of an aspiration of that sort, because you will be much too confused at the moment of death, anyway. Having said that, though, I am not quite sure, personally, where I would like to be reborn if I am to be reborn at all (laughter) though I have expressed the thought that I would not mind being reborn in India. I have said I don't know whether this has gone down in print yet; it has probably been transcribed, I am not sure whether it has been typed : It's in Shabda.

S.: Oh, it's in Shabda, is it? If so, I'll take that all as read. But sometimes I think that it wouldn't be a bad idea if I was reborn in India, because I wouldn't have a visa problem then, at least not as regards India. The trouble would be I would have a visa problem as regards Britain! I think, therefore, that before thinking seriously about one's next rebirth, one would have to go into this visa question (laughter). Someone like Prasannasiddhi is in a very fortunate position, because he is able to live freely in New Zealand, and Australia, I believe, and Britain, and in America. It is all a question of selecting one's parents skilfully. So I think I will have to get Subhuti to do a little sort of investigation (laughter), and then think it all over very carefully, so I shall be sure of being able to be of maximum usefulness. I think if one just developed the intention of being useful to the greatest extent that one possibly could, probably karma would sort out all these visa questions for you! One likes to think of the law of karma as functioning like a well-oiled computer.

: There might be a bit of space in Lokamitra's family... In other words, Lokamitra's Buddhaloka.

S.: I would much rather have him as a disciple! (Laughter.) But anyone who had Lokamitra as a father would certainly get a very good training, in one way and another.

Vessantara: There is one more question.

Gerry: It is a question ... again. I will give you three quotes I have heard you say and then ask you a few questions. First, I heard that a long time ago you said that you would expect, or hope, that an Order Member, if he sincerely practised, by the end of his life, would be a Stream Entrant. Secondly, in a recent Mitrata, on being asked why there were no Stream Entrants in the Order, you replied 'Why assume that there aren't?' Thirdly, I was under the impression from the reporting-in by Order Members just as we came here to Il Convento, that you felt something had quite definitely begun in the Order there seemed to be a certain change in your attitude to the Order.(1) What is your expectation now of a sincerely practising Order [33] Member? (2) In your estimation, are there any Stream Entrants in the Order? (3) For the future, is Stream Entry central to your teaching, and therefore essential to the Order? What do you see as the future of the Order in terms of Stream Entry, with particular reference to these Tuscany retreats?

S.: Let us take those questions one by one. Just the questions.

Gerry: First of all: what is your expectation now of a sincerely practising Order Member as regards Stream Entry?

S.: Well, it is at least what it was: that is to say, I see no reason why a sincerely practising Order Member should not be a Stream Entrant by the time of their death, assuming that they have, say, some 20 to 30 years. In some ways, it seems a reasonable expectation; because,

thinking it over, it does not really seem that Stream Entry is all that difficult; especially if one remembers that, according to tradition, especially the Theravada tradition, the most important thing, the most essential thing, in a way the crucial thing in respect of Stream Entry is a constant recollection of impermanence. Really, it is as simple as that: that if you are constantly mindful of the fact of impermanence, and act in accordance with that mindfulness, if you really see that things are impermanent and that therefore you must not cling on to them, that is all you really need to achieve Stream Entry. The achievement of subsequent paths is rather more difficult, but for the moment we are just concerned with Stream Entry. That is all it really requires. This is central to the Buddha's teaching, in a manner of speaking leaving aside the fact that Stream Entry is not the final goal, only the proximate goal; and it is certainly central, in that sense, in my own exposition of that teaching, and I think quite rightfully so. Stream Entry is a measurable and tangible goal that people can actually aim at in this lifetime, and the means is really very simple: basically, it is a constant recollection of impermanence obviously, not just on the basis of an ordinary scattered, distracted mind [but] on the basis of a reasonably concentrated mind; therefore meditation comes in, therefore meditation is useful as conducing to that concentrated and integrated mind. This is all that one really needs. In that sense, I say it is really a very simple matter. So it does, if one looks at it in this way and this is, as far as I can see, the way that the Buddha looked at it it does seem highly practicable. In fact, it would be surprising if, after 20 or 30 years of life in the Order, you were not a Stream Entrant. It would seem to be very surprising, if you have done all the other things maybe you have founded Centres and written books and given so many lectures and gone on so many retreats that you were not a Stream Entrant: why not? (Laughter.)

Tape 3, Side 1

I think, in modern times, in looking over the Buddhist world, the Theravadins have aimed too low usually, of course, they have not aimed at all! and the Mahayanists have aimed too high. The Theravadins, many of them, have said the Transcendental Path cannot be attained in this age; it is too corrupt, it is too degenerate; better to just aim at a better rebirth and be reborn, if you can, at the time of Maitreya and hear the Teaching directly from him. And the Mahayanists have spoken in terms of realizing Supreme Buddhahood, or at least being a Bodhisattva, and being a Bodhisattva for millions of aeons and saving untold numbers of beings. They are aiming too high, one might say in a manner of speaking. But if one thinks in terms of Stream Entry, it is neither so low as to [34] be meaningless nor is it so high as to be discouraging. I think Stream Entry is a goal that one can very realistically think in terms of, in a very reasonable, practical way. This is also one reason why I aim for, say, Stream Entry.

Gerry: The next question is: Are there any Order Members who are Stream Entrants, and, if so, who? (Laughter.)

S.: Well, obviously, it is very difficult to say, because one needs to observe people over a certain period of time. Because, externally speaking, it is very difficult to see the difference between a good Order Member, let us say or even under certain circumstances a bad Order Member and a Stream Entrant; because they might be doing all the right things and saying all the right things, but the test would be time, and coming up against it, encountering difficulties, maybe encountering persecution, encountering temptation. You can seem like a Stream Entrant when you are on retreat or when you are in Tuscany. It is very easy to behave like a Stream Entrant in Tuscany. But wait till you get back to the big city! Let us see whether you behave in the same way there. If you do, without any deviation, the chances are that

probably if you are not a Stream Entrant you are definitely moving in that direction. As for saying who is and who is not, I think this is a matter of skilful means; it isn't at all a positive thing. In some forms of Buddhism, for instance in some Zen schools, one finds sometimes that people are singled out and everybody is told they have got a certain ... or a certain realization, a certain breakthrough; I think this tends to develop a very unhealthy atmosphere of competitiveness, and I think we want to avoid that. So in fact it is the tradition, certainly in the Theravada, which is a more sober school of Buddhism, that one does not make claims; not only that one does not make false claims but one is very careful about making any sort of claim at all, even a true claim. But, in the case of spiritual attainments, a Transcendental attainment is, by its very nature, [something] that you personally cannot in the strict sense claim as being yours. So I think one has to be very careful to avoid thinking and speaking in that sort of way. If, in a manner of speaking, you are something of that kind if, in a manner of speaking, you are a Stream Entrant that should be obvious to all those with eyes to see, from your behaviour, your whole way of life. It should not be something that needed to be certified. Years ago in Burma, some meditation centres were certifying Stream Entrants and so on. I went to see a friend of mine years ago, and he had been to Burma for a few weeks, and there hanging up on his wall he had a certificate framed, declaring that he was a Stream Entrant and signed by the meditation teacher. Well, this really makes a mockery of the whole thing. So I think whether someone is or is not a Stream Entrant is something that is perhaps best left to be understood by those who understand, but not perhaps talked about at all.

Gerry: [Thirdly], bearing in mind an attitude I seemed to perceive displayed at the Order Convention, has that changed much towards the Order? What would you say

S.: I am not quite sure what they were referring to.

Gerry: I found the implication was that you felt something had begun. You had been talking very much before in terms of getting things going, but you seemed to be satisfied that some progress had been made.

S.: A little bit, yes! I am not quite sure whether whoever was commenting in this way was referring to something very specific or [to] a general sense or feeling that they had picked up I am not sure about that. Maybe one of the Order Members who were present can throw some light on the matter. I was reasonably satisfied with the Convention. Yes, I do believe that it did show [35] that some progress had been made; especially since the last Convention that we had. But, certainly, it is pretty clear that a lot of progress needs to be made, too. Does any Order Member remember anything being said or anything of that kind? I don't think I intimated any specific point in this respect.

Vessantara: I don't remember you saying anything specific. I got the impression from some of your comments that certainly, compared to the previous Convention, in some areas the Order seemed to have got off the starting line.

S.: There has seemed to be a certain degree of maturity that was not there before, a certain solidity. But then again I notice certain little weaknesses still. People were not very mindful when it came to eating, and things like that. I noticed several Order Members, I am sorry to say, taking their seats and immediately starting to tuck into their food without waiting even for anybody else to come and sit down. It seemed sometimes rather gross. So I did notice things like that, which I was not altogether happy with, and which needed to be corrected.

But, broadly speaking, yes, there was an increased maturity and solidity and strength, I felt, within the Order. I think there is no doubt about that. But still a lot of room for improvement.

Gerry: My question was as regards the future: do you have any thoughts, particularly in relation to the Tuscany process ... ?

S.: Well, I have had lots of thoughts about the future. My main thought in connection with the Tuscany process probably one that you might not be anticipating is that I am concerned that the women should have a Tuscany. This is what I have been thinking about a lot. Whether it is literally in Italy, or in Spain, or whether it is even in Britain. But a course corresponding to the Tuscany course for men is very much needed for the women, and I have been giving quite a bit of thought to that and talking it over with the women Order Members. That, as far as I can see, is the next big development in this connection, because the women generally are still rather lagging behind the men. But, yes, sometimes we do talk about having a six month Tuscany, a one year Tuscany, a two year Tuscany. Well, that could all come in the future, but I must say I am not thinking at present, in a very practical way, about longer Tuscanies. I don't see it as on the cards, so to speak, just yet, though I recognize it as desirable. So I am not actually giving it any concentrated thought. Maybe some other people are. If they are, that's fine. No doubt eventually something will happen in any case, but I am not particularly thinking about or planning for longer Tuscanies at present. Even the existing Tuscanies do stretch our resources of various kinds considerably, even at present. So we will have to think very carefully before stretching those resources even further whether resources of money or just resources of manpower, in coops and elsewhere. But I think there is a great deal of room for improvement within the existing structure, or of the existing structure, before we start extending it or stretching it. You will be hearing about these things in due course, those of you who are going to be ordained. I really would like to see a better, more regular attendance at Order chapter meetings. I would like to see them becoming more and more what I call spiritual workshops. I would like to see the national Order weekends and the regional Order weekends better attended than they are at present. So I think perhaps we need speaking with regard to the Order to give more and more attention to these things first, perfecting to a greater extent the existing structure of the Order, rather than expanding it or as I said stretching it further. Or perhaps similarly concentrate on having better Tuscanies rather than, for the time being, bigger in the sense of longer Tuscanies. There are all sorts of things that we can do to improve the Tuscanies. In former years, some people have arrived in Tuscany straight from work, quite literally. That certainly was not desirable. This year, that probably did not happen; I am not aware of it [36] happening in any particular case. People came after a period of comparative rest and relaxation, even if the relaxation did include mountaineering! But they did not come straight from work. I think that represents a great improvement, and probably we were able to get off to a better start because of that. So I hope in the future no one will have to come straight from work, as it were, to Tuscany, but have a period of rest and relaxation in between, so that they are fit and fresh, possibly suntanned, when they arrive. That's it? Right, good.

[37]

Tape 4, Side 1

Vessantara: ...We will start with some questions which are still left over from that time. The other night you were talking about the subtle body, and Bram ... has a question.

Bram: I think I will be able to ask this question. You talked about three types of body the gross body, the astral body and the subtle body. Is it possible to relate them to the five skandhas

S.: To the five skandhas, hm. I don't remember that they have been related specifically to the five skandhas, but I would imagine that the gross physical body would, of course, be relegated to the rupa skandha and the astral body, too, inasmuch as the astral body is made of subtle matter, one might say. Therefore, I also imagine that the subtle body would be relegated to the other four skandhas, which collectively constitute nama as distinct from rupa; possibly to the vijnana(?) skandha rather than to any of the others. I did in fact mention, I think, the other evening that one could perhaps regard the subtle body as connected, even though not actually identical, with the pratisantivijnana(?), the relinking consciousness, the consciousness through which the transition was effected from the present to the future life. So I imagine that the three bodies would be distributed in that way; certainly the connection of the first and the second with the rupa skandha is quite clear. One could even argue from that that, inasmuch as the connection of the physical body and the astral body with the rupa skandha is quite clear, and inasmuch as the subtle body is not material, it cannot but be connected with one or another of the remaining four skandhas, and probably, as I said, with the vijnana skandha.

Vessantara: Wayne also had a question related to the subtle body.

Wayne: It came on p.15, where Gampopa says: 'As a human being means to have the same fate and fortune as other men and to have either the male or female organs.' So, discussing that sort of thing, there are three questions: a) assuming there is a correspondence between the subtle body and the physical body, which is the nature of that correspondence between the two bodies? b) what might be the effect of castration upon the subtle body? (c) how would this affect one's spiritual practice, particularly in relation to the androgynous experience of the higher dhyanas i.e. the lack of sexual polarization that is said to occur in those states?

S.: Let us go through those one by one.

Wayne: Assuming there is a correspondence between the subtle body and the physical body, what is the nature of that correspondence?

S.: Tradition, including texts like The Tibetan Book of the Dead, makes it clear that the subtle body is alike in all respects to the physical body: that it is, so to speak, its exact counterpart, except that it is subtle rather than gross. I think some of these texts make this point quite explicitly. Perhaps this is not to be taken too literally, inasmuch as a very subtle body, if it is a mental body, does not have form in quite the same way that a physical body does.

Nonetheless, the point by point, as it were limb by limb, even hair by hair, correspondence between the two is quite definitely affirmed by tradition.

[38]

Wayne: What might be the effect of castration upon the subtle body?

S.: None at all, because it is the subtle body which is as it were primary. One might say that the physical body and the astral body reflect the subtle body, or are reproductions of the subtle body in a grosser medium. You might say that the fact that some damage is done to a

photograph does not affect the photographic plate; or that the fact that some damage is done to an image produced from a mould does not affect the mould itself. It is rather like that. This is the traditional teaching. I am giving just the traditional teaching; I am not attempting any sort of philosophical or quasiphilosophical justification.

Prasannasiddhi: Does that mean that the subtle body would be androgynous?

S.: Well, if you were not androgynous, it would not be, no. Or rather, you are not androgynous because it is not androgynous.

Wayne: [Thirdly,] how would this affect one's spiritual practice, particularly in relation to the androgynous experience of the higher dhyanas, i.e. the lack of sexual polarization that is said to occur in those states?

S.: The present physical body in this life represents your base, and you return to that base from excursions elsewhere, one might say. So in the dhyana state, if it is a sufficiently high dhyana state, you would be as it were androgynous; you would have modified your subtle body to an androgynous condition. Nonetheless, you have to return to your physical base, which is not androgynous. But if your experience of that dhyana state, and therefore of an androgynous subtle body, was sufficiently strong, sufficiently prolonged, and if you were therefore reborn after death in a world corresponding to that dhyana experience or that dhyana level, you would then be reborn apparitionally with an androgynous subtle body. Again, I am just relating the traditional teaching on the matter. It just struck me as interesting that you gave the example of castration, because one could just as well have asked about losing an arm or a leg or even a tooth.

Wayne: There was a reason for that! We had been talking about the Vinaya and the bhikshu ordination, and asking whether a person applying for it was complete as a male complete sexually. I was wondering why that was actually asked and what the significance was of that.

S.: It is usually held in Buddhist circles that if you are an incomplete male human being in that respect, that means or at least suggests that you are deficient in the corresponding masculine energy, which is necessary to pursue the Path. It is also said that you cannot meaningfully take a particular Precept or Precepts unless you possess the capacity not only to observe those Precepts but to break those Precepts; in fact, you cannot undertake to observe unless you possess the capacity not to observe, or to break. This is another explanation which is given. Again, I am reproducing tradition.

Tejamitra: There is a bit of a difficulty if the subtle body always corresponds to the physical body. What about rebirth because in rebirth you get a completely different physical body; so what is happening to the subtle body?

S.: Well, I have suggested just now that the subtle body, while remaining, of course, a subtle body and a mental body, is modified by your thoughts, words and deeds. So traditional Buddhism would maintain that if, during your lifetime as a man, your thoughts, words and deeds tended to be feminine rather than masculine, you would actually in the course of your lifetime modify your subtle body. Of course, you would maintain, during the present lifetime, your present physical base in the form of a masculine body, but if with that masculine body base you had [39] modified your subtle body so that it was a feminine subtle body, upon your

death the likelihood would be that corresponding to your feminine subtle body you would take birth in a female gross body. Again, I am reproducing the traditional teaching. In other words, one sees that the subtle body is much more malleable than the physical body. This is the reason why the Buddha said on one occasion that he found it much more surprising that people should identify themselves with their minds one might say with their subtle body than with the gross physical body, because the gross physical body was at least relatively stable. And you must bear in mind that the traditional Indian conception of selfhood was that it was unchanging, that it was stable; so, bearing that in mind, it is more surprising that people should identify their self, which is by definition stable and unchanging, with their mind or with their subtle body rather than with their gross physical body. So the subtle body which is attached to the gross physical body, or to which the gross physical body is attached, is much more malleable; and that provides the blueprint. You cannot very greatly modify the present product of the previous blueprint, but with the present product of the previous blueprint as your base you can modify the present blueprint, and therefore the future product of the changed present blueprint. This is roughly the Buddhist principle. You modify the body by the mind; that is to say, you modify the future body, your body in a future rebirth, via the modification of the present mind dropping for the moment the expression 'subtle body'.

: Why do you think the moment before death state of consciousness is so important in that respect to the subtle body and its rebirth?

S.: The state of mind at death is only one of the factors to be taken into consideration, or only one of the factors determining the nature of the future rebirth. I have gone into the details in the lecture I gave on 'Karma and Rebirth' some years ago (my longest lecture, perhaps not surprisingly). There is a division of karma into several different kinds, different classifications of karma; and one classification is in accordance with their relative priority with regard to taking effect. Even though, for instance, your consciousness at the moment of death drastically modifies, or determines, the nature of your future rebirth, that in turn may be drastically, even quickly, modified by a residue of strong habitual karma. Do you see what I mean? So the issue is quite a complex one, and you probably need to listen to that lecture or consult some other printed source.

Vessantara: What effect would Insight have on the subtle body?

S.: This raises the whole question of the relationship between what is body and what is not body. I have expressed the view, some time in the past, that everything has bodies, so to speak, whether gross or subtle. We even speak of the three bodies of the Buddha, though clearly the word 'body' here is not used quite in the ordinary sense, at least in the case of the Dharmakaya and the Sambhogakaya. But one may take it that, yes, Insight does modify the subtle body. I think probably one might say that the Theravada view, as commonly expressed not necessarily the view of the Buddha in the Theravada scriptures is that Insight as it were eats away the subtle body, like a sort of acid. But then one cannot really say that nothing exists, or that nothing exists after death, because the Buddha has clearly said that the Tathagata, after bodily death, cannot be spoken of in terms of either existence or nonexistence, or both, or neither; so it as though I won't say something exists, because that is to fall into the opposite error; perhaps you could say that there is a sort of subtle existence, hopefully without falling into the third alternative! So it would not be incorrect to say that, in a sense, a subtle, a very subtle, possibly Transcendental subtle body does persist after Enlightenment, irrespective of the presence or absence of the physical body. In the Vajrayana

sometimes mention is made of the Vajrakaya or the Rainbow Body; [40] it would seem to correspond to some such conception, though obviously it is a very subtle one. But to go back to this question of body: if we conceive of Reality at all, we cannot but conceive of it in terms of as it were subject or as it were object. If it is legitimate to conceive of it in terms of subject, it is legitimate to conceive of it in terms of object; object corresponds to body. So one might say that some sort of archetypal counterpart of what we experience as physical body always persists. I was going to say something more, but I think I won't; it would probably lead us too far afield, and we have got, what, 20 questions?

Vessantara: Before we do move on, could you just reassure me that doing the Tara visualization won't lead one to be reborn as a woman in one's next life?

S.: Well, if it does, what does it matter? (Laughter.) You can still be ordained! It might be a pleasant change, who knows? One should keep one's mind open to all sorts of possibilities.

Vessantara: Shantiraja, anyway, had a question of information.

Shantiraja: On p.2, Gampopa gives a list of topics covered in the book, and the last on the list reads: 'The activity is working for the benefit of others without preconceived ideas.' This refers to the term nirvikalpa, which Guenther later on in the text translates as 'without habit-making thoughts'. The footnote he gives here seemed to us quite ambiguous. Could you please explain the meaning of 'working without preconceived ideas'?

S.: You mean 'working without preconceived ideas' in the sense of the English expression, or in the sense of nirvikalpa?

Shantiraja: In the sense of nirvikalpa.

S.: Nirvikalpa is a quite common word in India. It is used quite often in a Vedantic context. One encounters it, for instance, in the form of nirvikalpa samadhi savikalpa(?) samadhi, nirvikalpa samadhi. Vikalpa has the general sense of thoughts or concepts any kind of mental activity; that is the broad general meaning of the term. So if you don't have any ideas or concepts you can't have any preconceived ideas or concepts; that seems pretty obvious. I think what it means to work for the benefit of others without preconceived ideas is to work spontaneously; to work from an inner realization of the Transcendental, to work out of genuine Wisdom and Compassion which means that you are able to see people's genuine spiritual needs; you are able to see them as they really are; you are able, therefore, really to help them, not simply to help them in accordance with your own ideas, your own preconceived ideas, of what they ought to want, and therefore how they ought to be helped. Do you see what I mean? There is a story I am trying to remember about a man who was travelling in Ireland, and he got lost; so he stopped an Irishman and asked him, 'How do I get to Dublin? I'm lost.' So the Irishman said, 'Oh, it depends where you start from.' That is not much use; he wants to know how to get to Dublin from where he is. So you have got, in the same way, to help people to get to Enlightenment from where they actually are, not from some place where you think they ought to have been instead, or some place where you think it would be better for them to be. But, of course, you have got to be sure also that you are actually leading them in the direction of Enlightenment, even though your starting point is where they actually are. [41] I think this is the broad sense, the broad significance, of this topic. You can work for the benefit of others without preconceived ideas only to the extent

that you are Enlightened, only to the extent that you have Insight, only to the extent that you have experience of sunyata and karuna. We know that from our own experience, that if you have to deal with people, if perhaps people ask you for help, if they ask for advice, it is very easy just to give advice off the top of your head; there is nothing easier than to give advice. But there is not much point in giving advice unless you can really see where the other person is at, what is actually happening, what their experience is like, what they really need, what they are really capable of. You may need to study them very carefully and to get to know them very well, even very deeply; not just automatically apply stereotyped criteria.

Vessantara: Another request for elucidation. On p.6 of the text, about halfway down the page, there is a paragraph beginning: 'As to their respective essence, the Self-existing family has the power of setting up the Buddha-dharmas, is of beginningless time, and has been obtained by the very nature of all that is' which, the last part of that according to Guenther, is a translation of dharmatapatilabda. Can you elucidate what that, especially the last part of that sentence, refers to?

S.: That is quite simple, really. Guenther doesn't say anything about this, but basically it is a classification of the two kinds of Bodhisattva. The Self-existing family consists of what we have come to call the archetypal Bodhisattvas, those who have no history, those who have no beginning in time, those who are aspects, to use that expression, of Enlightenment or Buddhahood itself. The Evolved family is, of course, the family consisting of those Bodhisattvas with a history, with an origin, in time. The expression dharmatapatilabda gives expression to the fact that the existence of archetypal Bodhisattvas is due to the very nature of Reality itself. Dharmatapatilabda means what does Guenther translate it as? Dharmata is dharmaness.

Vessantara: It is translated as 'obtained by the very nature of all that is.'

S.: Ah! Well, yes, you see 'all that is' that isn't really very satisfactory. Dharma here means much what it means when we speak of the Dharmakaya or the Dharmadhatu; it is not just 'all that is' in the sense of the total assemblage of all discrete particulars, or all phenomena; it isn't that. Dharma means well, we can only say the Ultimate Reality. So dharmata is Ultimate Realityness, you know? That ta is a suffix denoting an abstract quality, as in Tathata. Then patilabda means, yes, it means attainment, one might say. What does Guenther say?

Vessantara: 'Has been obtained by the very nature of all that is.'

S.: Yes; so that family 'has been obtained by the very nature of all that is'; no, the existence of that family, I would say, rather, is due to the very nature of Reality itself. Reality is of such a nature as to express itself in this many-faceted manner in the form of what we call the archetypal Bodhisattvas. The archetypal Bodhisattvas are different aspects of Buddhahood, or different aspects of, one might say, the Buddha in the highest sense of the Dharmakaya Buddha. So Reality is of such a nature as to be so constituted. This is what it really means.

Dhammarati: ... I understood it was the self-existing Bodhisattvas you had equated with the real arising of the Bodhicitta and the Evolved Family, or the effect of the arising of the Bodhicitta. But I understood both of them to be ...

S.: No, I would say that the Self-Existing Family corresponds to the absolute Bodhicitta, and

the Evolved Family corresponds to the arisen Bodhicitta.

[42]

Dharmadhara: Why does Reality expressed in ... ?

S.: How can there be a 'why' with regard to Ultimate Reality? because you are referring to a further principle of explanation. So, if you have to do that, or if you are able to do that, the 'ultimate' is not Ultimate. So we ... is the Dharmata it is the very nature of the Ultimate Reality, not just so to express itself that is not really a very satisfactory expression it is just from our point of view but to be of such a nature. Why is the Uncompounded Uncompounded? Why is the Absolute Absolute? Do you see what I mean? Why is Reality Reality? The question is really self-contradictory. On the other hand, in a sense, we can't help asking it I was going to say, because it is logically possible, but perhaps it is isn't logically possible, it is only verbally possible, it is grammatically possible. But, in a sense, it doesn't constitute actually a question. In other words, we cannot go further than that; if we are to use words or concepts at all, probably we can't go further than that. I think what is important about that sort of definition, if it is a definition, is that it makes it clear that Reality, or Ultimate Reality, if one wants to use that highly abstract expression, is not in fact something abstract in the sense of being something featureless or something inert or anything of that sort, but it is the Ultimate Source, if one likes to use that expression, of spiritual Transcendental life and vitality. That is being very figurative, very metaphorical indeed, but probably that is better than being too abstract, and in that way misleading people and possibly putting them off the spiritual life, because you don't make the ultimate goal of the spiritual life sound very attractive.

Vessantara: Pavel had another question ...

Pavel: In p.1 para.2, Gampopa writes about bewilderment and raises the question: 'From which fundamental stuff does this bewilderment come?' If we think about bewilderment as the natural state of the human mind, it seems logical to assume that the human consciousness arising from the animal consciousness during the lower evolution cannot but be bewilderment. Unfortunately for us, our evolution stopped there, and so we have to undertake the difficult path from our ... consciousness to the Enlightened consciousness by our individual effort, and this constitutes the purpose of our lives. So my first question is: why is that? What sense does it make?

S.: What sense does what make?

Pavel: That lower evolution stopped at this point, and the rest is left to our individual effort. Perhaps lower evolution could go a bit further [so that] we will get mind, not just bewilderment.

S.: Again, I think that would be a contradiction in terms. I think it is very doubtful whether you can get a mind that is not bewildered simply as a result of the lower, i.e. the collective, evolution. But you seem to have made quite a big jump from the purely metaphysical to the historical, psychological and biological. [Gampopa] I was going to say Guenther, but really it is Gampopa as interpreted or translated by Guenther is not in a way very satisfactory here, because he says: 'It may further be asked from which fundamental stuff does this bewilderment come?' Well, 'fundamental stuff' whatever the original Tibetan expression is is

not a very Buddhistic expression. The Pali Buddhist scriptures, at least, make it quite clear that ignorance is primordial; it has no perceptible beginning. There is no question of it coming [from] anywhere. And I think Gampopa himself lays himself open to serious misunderstanding when he says: 'And the answer is: from Sunyata' because that suggests that sunyata is a sort of first principle; if you go back and back [43] sufficiently far you come to the beginning of ignorance and you can observe it actually coming out of sunyata as though sunyata was a sort of cosmological principle; which it absolutely is not. So the mischief is done by this little preposition 'from'. In a sense, all things are 'of sunyata', not just ignorance; all things are by their nature sunyata, so you could say, in a manner of speaking, that all things come from sunyata. So, if all things come from sunyata, it does not add to your knowledge of bewilderment to know that it too comes from sunyata. It is not an addition to your knowledge at all, it doesn't really tell you anything. So one cannot really say that bewilderment comes from sunyata in any sequential sense. As I said, the traditional Buddhist view, as represented by the Pali scriptures, always has been that you cannot in fact perceive the absolute first beginning of ignorance. The context is, of course, one of karma and rebirth, because traditional Buddhism sees the series of karma and rebirth, the series of rebirths, as going back and back in time, way beyond history, way beyond the evolutionary process the lower evolutionary process as known, say, to modern science; it sees it going back into other worlds, other world periods, other universes, even; but sees that chain of rebirths or that subtle body, let us say, which is traced back and back in that way, as being all the time imbued by ignorance, and there being no perceptual beginning of that ignorance and no perceptual beginning of that particular as it were individual.

Pavel: So has everybody existed even before history, before mankind occurred?

S.: Yes, this is the traditional Buddhist view, yes: that individuals or, to use the unBuddhistic term, which perhaps we should not be afraid of using, souls, are sort of carried over from one universe to another; and they wait in a certain subtle sphere until material conditions in the new world, the new universe, are such that they can take embodiment; and then the whole process of the lower evolution begins again. That is the traditional Buddhist view. But it is I won't say it is a completely different perspective from the modern scientific one, but it is a broader, more comprehensive one, within which perhaps the scientific world view can be fitted. But there is no question, in any case, of an absolute first beginning of ignorance, of bewilderment, from anything, whether from sunyata or anything else. So this paragraph could be quite misleading, or is, perhaps, quite misleading.

Pavel: So there is actually no connection between bewilderment and sunyata?

S.: No.

Pavel: No connection between those two?

S.: It depends what one means by connection. Sunyata is not the causal principle. It does not represent a sort of first cause. Bewilderment or ignorance does not go back to sunyata in the way that the Creation of the universe, say, in Christian theology, goes back to God as its first cause. You can't put as it were sunyata in the place of God in that way. In fact you can't put anything in the place of God, according to Buddhism. There is no ultimate first beginning of things perceptible. Even the very notion of a first beginning of things depends upon our particular, necessarily limited, way of looking at things. The whole idea of first beginning is

just a notion, just a concept, according to Buddhism, that we superimpose upon Reality; not part of the structure of Reality itself.

: Can you say that because sunyata is a mystery of our experience so bewilderment is because we think conceptually and we are not in touch with that mystery, so -

[44]

S.: Yes, that is certainly I

: this may be a kind of connection between those two?

S.: Yes, but it would not be a connection, in the strict as it were metaphysical sense. That would be to be misled by words, if one thought of there being a connection actually between them simply because one could make a statement of that kind. But again, we use words to get free from words, etc. etc. We have to use words, apparently; that seems to be the only way in which we can get free from words. We have to pursue these sort of questions until we can't pursue them any more, until we actually come to the limits of what we can conceive. And then, of course, if we are lucky, we get a sort of glimpse of what is beyond our capacity to conceive.

Vessantara: We are still going through questions left over. John.

John: In the last Question and Answer session, I asked your opinion as to which Buddha family was most prevalent in the West today and what effect it had on the growth of the FWBO. I was actually referring to the Buddha families in the text, rather than the

S.: Ah rather than the Dhyani Buddha families. Difficult to say, isn't it? Because presumably the question involves looking not just at the FWBO but outside the FWBO also. Presumably the Theravadins are influenced by the Arhant ideal, and could be regarded as belonging to that particular family. I don't know whether anybody particularly wants to be a pratyekabuddha. Presumably all Mahayanists, whether Tibetan Buddhists or Zen Buddhists, belong at least in theory, at least in principle to the Bodhisattva family; because presumably they all follow the Mahayana in one form or another. So I think probably, numerically, the Mahayanists do outnumber the Theravadins. But what significance that fact has, to what extent they are really and truly, spiritually speaking, influenced by that particular ideal or that particular family, is quite another matter.

John: I think I was asking more in terms of the general public, you know, and whether they were Dubious Family or Cutoff Family

S.: I think the general public is in a very dubious family indeed (laughter)! It is so dubious, it is dubious whether they belong to any Buddha family at all even the Dubious one! But I think you could say that there are quite a few people around nowadays who possess at least a good potential for belonging to the Dubious Family! Vessantara: Ian's question about impermanence and Stream Entry.

Ian: At the last Question and Answer session, you talked about the importance of remaining mindful of impermanence. What methods would you recommend for keeping this mindfulness on the go? Would it be a good idea to meditate on impermanence with the same

regularity that we meditate on metta and mindfulness maybe after Mitra [admission?]?

S.: There are several questions there. First of all, how we are to remain mindful of impermanence. This is quite a big question how one is to remain mindful. In a way, there is no method; because if you want to remain mindful you have to be mindful that you need to remain mindful, and so on. You have to remind yourself. But there are things that one can do to help oneself. One can put oneself, when one is mindful, into the kind of situation or within the kind of structure which is likely to help you to be mindful. That, of course, includes contact with spiritual friends who may be able to pull you up and remind you to be mindful on those [45] occasions when you forget yourself. So one can do that whether with regard to the practice of the mindfulness of impermanence or mindfulness of anything else that you want to remain mindful of. For instance, you might have become conscious, you might have become mindful, of the fact that sometimes you talk too much; but when you talk too much, you don't realize that you are talking too much. You only realize it, if you realize it at all, afterwards, because when you are talking too much you are so carried away by what you are saying that you just lose your mindfulness. But you can say to a friend: 'Look here, if you find that I am talking too much, just pull me up or, if you don't think that appropriate, just give me a little signal, maybe just rub the side of your nose, like that, and then I'll know that I'm talking too much, I'll become aware of it, and ...

Tape 4, Side 2

... So you can in this way set up situations within which it will be more easy for you to be mindful, to remain mindful, whether of the fact of impermanence or anything else that you want to bear in mind on a more regular basis. With regard to actually practising mindfulness of impermanence, death etc. in this regular way, I think one has to be sure, first of all, that one has got a sufficient basis of emotional positivity; otherwise you may become a little discouraged or even a little depressed. We all know the story of the monks to whom the Buddha taught the mindfulness of death, and what happened. So I think it is important that we do have a basis of quite strong emotional positivity in the form of metta, mudita and karuna, before we take up mindfulness of impermanence, recollection of death and so on. But certainly, once we have succeeded in establishing that basis of emotional positivity, the mindfulness of impermanence [and] recollection of death represent we might say the next step, almost; because they are very important methods of developing Insight. So, eventually, every Order Member ought to incorporate something of that kind into his or her regular spiritual practice. It should not even be just something that you think of when you sit down and meditate; it should be something that you are bearing in mind all the time. It is probably a little difficult when you are young, because it is difficult to actually imagine yourself as dead, or as liable to death, because you are so full of youthful vitality that it just seems impossible, just incredible, that that should all be cancelled, wiped out, and just not be that you, as you at present are, should just vanish from the face of the earth. That seems almost inconceivable, really; you may pay lip service to the idea, but you cannot really imagine it, not very easily.

Dhammarati: Bhante, you were talking about Order chapters and about spiritual workshops. I wondered whether it would be helpful to chapters if you could say any more about spiritual workshops.

S.: I can only speak in a quite general way, because the form that the spiritual workshop takes and this is a very makeshift expression obviously depends on the particular qualities of the

individual members of the particular chapter. When I used the expression spiritual workshop, I was not so much laying down a definite programme as trying to suggest what a meeting of a chapter of the Order should not be. It should not be just a social occasion not that social occasions are necessarily bad things, but a meeting of a chapter of the Order should not be just a social occasion, should not be just an occasion when you sit down, have a cup of tea and a pleasant little chat and that's that. Again, it should not be devoted entirely to organizational matters, though from time to time those may have to be considered. And certainly it should not just be a dull, routine affair to which you go along out of a sense of duty, but to which you do not really look forward. So when I use this expression 'spiritual workshop', I want to make it clear that a meeting of a chapter of the Order should not be any of these things. This is what [46] I want to do in the first place. I used the expression 'spiritual' to emphasize the fact that it was a meeting of Order Members, a meeting of people spiritually committed, and that therefore the purpose of their coming together was, in a manner of speaking, spiritual; that was the basis on which they came together. But, having come together even on that basis, they did not just sit back and enjoy their beautiful spirituality or just revel in their common commitment, as it were, but they did something; it was a workshop, something happened. It was a workshop in the sense that they worked with and on one another in such a way that they were all helped towards a fuller, deeper experience of their commitment, of the spiritual life; a better understanding of the Buddha's teaching, and so on, in whatsoever way they wished. They could do it by discussion, they could play games in a manner of speaking! They could do certain exercises together, they could meditate together, they could do whatever they pleased so long as it was on the definite, recognized basis of their common spiritual commitment, so that something actually happened concretely, as a result of which they all were refreshed, so to speak, in their spiritual commitment, and advanced to a further, a higher level of commitment. This is what I wanted to suggest by using this expression 'spiritual workshop'; not just prescribe that, when Order Members gather together for their chapter meeting, such-and-such or such-and-such specifically should happen. The specific form the meeting takes is left for those who actually meet together. I was just giving very general guidelines.

Dhammarati: In your experience of Order Members. could you generalize about the kind of ... a chapter should be paying attention to?

S.: Of course, it would depend on the individuals, because it is individuals paying attention to other individuals. I think it is very important that Order Members encourage one another in their commitment; encourage one another in the living of the spiritual life, and even what shall I say? point out shortcomings. But I think also one must be very careful that the meeting does not develop or degenerate into a sort of fault-finding session. One has to be very careful of that. You might have become aware that a certain Order Member, a member of the chapter, is not behaving very skilfully in a particular respect; you have to be very careful how you bring that up. Perhaps it is better, in many cases, to bring it up with that person individually, personally, rather than at the chapter meeting; but it cannot be altogether ignored. Something must be done about it, if the unskilfulness is persistent, by somebody in some way or other. One thing that Order Members meeting together in a chapter can do is, for instance, to discuss how effective they can be collectively. They can discuss whether, in connection with their local centre or not, what possibilities there are for giving lectures, for spreading the Dharma; in that way they can try to stir up a bit of enthusiasm among themselves. If anybody sees that certain Order Members are becoming rather dull and dispirited, they can try to cheer them up, help create a happy, positive, inspired atmosphere. If your efforts do not seem to be meeting

with any great success, you can gently probe why is it that that particular Order Member or those particular Order Members have not come along in a happy, gleeful, inspired mood because they ought to have done; they ought to be meeting together in that way, that spirit. They should not just be sitting around glumly, as though they are sort of meditating on their sins! These are the sort of things one can do. Again, I don't want to be too prescriptive or too definite; it will differ somewhat according to the people present, and their needs and general situation and so on. But certainly, Order meetings ought to be the highlight of the week, and for some chapters I know they are; but I think for some other chapters perhaps they are not quite! I hope that the highlight of the week is not when you go and have your weekly visit to the cinema or your weekly visit to your girl friend; I hope that is not the highlight of the week. [47] This is the sort of question, perhaps, we can go into a bit more specifically, more closely, later on, when we have the smaller meetings; because I think something of this sort cannot be discussed, except in very general terms, in a meeting of this size. But if anyone by that time, no doubt, everybody will be ordained has got any specific points with regard to this question of chapter meetings, we can have them brought out and talk about them in our smaller, informal discussion gatherings later on.

Vessantara: One more technical question on the first chapter, and then we move on to 10 or so questions on the second chapter. Tejamitra had a question about the Buddhadharmas.

Tejamitra: On p.6 Gampopa refers to the Buddhadharmas, and there is a note on this on p.13, note 39, where he says that they comprise three things: the ten powers (balas), then the four intrepidities (vaisaradya), then the three types of inspection (smrtyupasthana). Only the balas are mentioned in the Survey, and they are said to be unimportant. Could you comment on this, and tell us about the four intrepidities and the three types of inspection?

S.: Vaisaradyas, the intrepidities, are usually translated as 'fearlessnesses'. I can't enumerate the four offhand, but broadly speaking they represent the fact that the Buddha is not to be scared by anything, that the Buddha is in possession of complete fearlessness. When, by the way, I said the ten powers were unimportant, I meant simply not that the Buddha's qualities and attributes were unimportant but that that particular list does not occur frequently and is not made much of in terms of actual practice or in terms of the cultivation of the Path. The three kinds of what Guenther calls inspection the mindfulnesses, as it would be usually translated well, there are four, the standard four. One seems to have been missed out of those four, apparently or presumably the last; unless, of course, one takes inspection as being of body, speech and mind, which is possible, though I think not likely; and then, of course, Great Compassion. The ten powers, as far as I remember, unlike the intrepidities and the different types of inspection, don't seem to occur very early in Buddhist literature. It is a Hinayana list inherited by the Mahayana, but it appears, as far as I remember, only in late Pali literature. I don't think the list appears in the early literature, and possibly not in the suttas at all; I wouldn't be too sure of that, but certainly not in what appear to be the earlier portions of the Canon. You have got, of course, the five powers it is the same word, which are the five spiritual faculties, as we call them, the five indriyas, rendered unshakeable. In Sanskrit works the Buddha is sometimes called Dasabala 'he of the ten powers'.

Vessantara: We move on now to some questions raised in chapter 2, 'The Working Basis', starting with some questions about devas. We'll start with Dharmadhara(?).

Dharmadhara: Can we apply the two escape routes from the hell realms, which you

mentioned last time that is, contact with a Bodhisattva and external [factors?] and the expiry of the karma which led you to be there to the deva realm as well, or are they also able to move out under their own steam, as it were, through deep enough experience of impermanence? In asking this, we realize that talking of devas covers a wide range of states.

S.: It does seem, if one goes by the scriptures, that some devas can themselves awaken to the transitoriness of their own lot, and therefore develop some kind of spiritual awareness, some kind of spiritual consciousness. But you may remember that, in Tibetan representations of the Wheel of Life, a Buddha form, which is in [48] fact a transformation of Avalokitesvara, appears in all five or six realms. This does suggest that the Bodhisattvas are, or at least can be, active in all these realms, and that therefore, just as in the case of the hell beings so in the case of the hungry ghosts and the animals, there is a Bodhisattva present in, so to speak, Buddha form to help them to grow or to develop during that particular lifetime, so that they do not necessarily have to wait for the expiry of the karma which has brought about that particular life at the time of death.

Dharmadhara: Traditionally it is said that [devas] only experience pleasure; so it could conceivably be that they do experience some degree of suffering as well?

S.: Ah! There is an important point here, which is that you do not have to experience suffering, necessarily, in order to understand the truth of suffering. The truth of suffering is not identical with the fact of suffering, because you can be enjoying a thoroughly pleasurable experience, and at the same time realize that, metaphysically speaking, as it were in an absolute perspective it is in a sense suffering. So in that way a deva can awaken to the truth of suffering without actually experiencing suffering himself; certainly not suffering in the ordinary sense, certainly not the suffering which is suffering, to use the traditional terminology, or even at that particular time suffering by way of transformation. But, of course, towards the end of his life as a deva, as his glory starts waning, he will start perceiving a change; he will start experiencing viparinama dukkha, that is to say dukkha by way of transformation, and of course may develop a high awareness or consciousness on that account, before actually passing away from the deva state.

Suvajra: You mentioned that there is a Buddha in each of the realms or ...s. This includes the realm of the devas. There are devas of the rupaloka and of the arupaloka as well as of kamaloka. How is it that a Buddha can communicate with devas of the rupaloka and arupaloka which are beyond those lokas which correspond to the dhyanas, in which there is no conceptualization?

S.: I would say if a Buddha can communicate with human beings he can communicate with anybody! Well, you have to attract someone's attention. (Laughter.) You just have to knock; you have to arouse them, perhaps, from their deep nonconceptual dhyana; perhaps you have to disturb them. Perhaps that is the Buddha's function, at least to begin with, on those levels. No doubt the Buddhas have all sorts of mysterious methods.

Suvajra: So would I be right in thinking that the Buddha's communication would be nonconceptual?

S.: Not necessarily, because, as I said, a Buddha might disturb one of these meditating devas and in a way distract him, very positively, to such an extent that trains of conceptual thought

might be set up, and in that way function as a medium of communication. One can certainly envisage that sort of thing happening. Again, the Buddha might show himself to that deva, might show his form, and that might cause the deva to recollect Buddhas he had seen, perhaps, in previous lifetimes, and that might cause him to recollect their teaching. No doubt there are all sorts of possibilities. I don't think a Buddha would be at a loss.

Suvajra: Also, how would it be that two devas could communicate? Do devas communicate?

S.: Devas can communicate provided that they are on the same plane or in the same world. Otherwise their worlds as it were interpenetrate and they don't see one [49] another. There could be thousands of devas present even in this room, in a manner of speaking, but one does not see them because one is not in a state of consciousness corresponding to their world, so to speak, even though their world is, in a manner of speaking, occupying the same space as our world.

Suvajra: But if their lokas correspond to dhyanas which are beyond the first dhyana, how do they communicate?

S.: We are told in some suttas that some devas communicate through a smile! Or they communicate just by looking, communicate by gesture; because those things also can constitute a language. One might even say that concepts may be associated with that kind of language as well as with our oral or verbal language. It was quite interesting I think I have spoken about this to one or two people that when I recorded the series of TV talks which I will be giving, so to speak, next year (the first week of June, I think) while I was actually giving them, while they were being recorded, a woman was in the studio with me translating them into deaf and dumb sign language; so there were no spoken words, she was just making a series of signs. But that series of signs translated what I was saying. So that series of signs had come to be associated with concepts, which in our case are associated with spoken or written words. So I suppose it is much the same in these deva kingdoms; there is a language of signs for some, there is a language of smiles for others. In our crude human world, a smile is just a smile, you know, it is just a big grin; or maybe there are two or three kinds of smiles there is the Mona Lisa smile, there is the angelic smile, there is the impudent smile, and so on. But in a deva realm they might have hundreds of thousands of different kinds of smile: so many that they can build up a whole language of them. And on an even higher level, just so many different ways of looking at one another. We have only got just a very small repertoire of looks the dirty look (laughter), the intelligent look, the pseudo-sophisticated look, the charming look, the come-hither look a very meagre repertoire. But up there, there is no doubt a repertoire of thousands of looks which again can be combined into a very expressive language. So I think they don't suffer from any inadequacy in the means of communication whatsoever.

Suvajra: I didn't think they would suffer from inadequacy, but I wondered what was the nature of the communication, especially after you had been speaking on the Chairmen's

S.: The nature of the communication?

Suvajra: If that is the right expression I want to use. Well, how did they do it? This is what I wanted to know. You had been speaking on the Chairmen's seminar about the possibility, in the higher dhyana states, of there being a very subtle conceptualization which continued

whether this is the use or not (?).

S.: One could no doubt speak in those sort of terms, yes. Just as there is a very subtle body even in those states, in the same way, presumably, there is also very subtle vocalization, even very subtle speech, very subtle thought. Probably most people have the experience of very fine thoughts that are so fine they can hardly think them; nonetheless, they are there, and they are not easy to put into words or to write down. Perhaps one should think of the devas as having these sort of thoughts, rather than think of them as having no thoughts, which suggests that they are sort of inert, that they have sunk below the level of consciousness that we inhabit. We cannot really imagine what communication among the devas is actually like; we can only imagine it as being an infinitely more refined form of something with which we ourselves are familiar.

Vessantara: We talked earlier about some people being debarred from the Sangha -

[50]

S.: Being ?

Vessantara: Being debarred from ordination. There were also people such as blind and deaf people, I believe, who could not have ordination. Was this because they too were in some way deficient in their capacity to make progress ..., or was it simply that they were to some extent ... ?

S.: I think it would have been very difficult for a deaf and dumb person to make progress in the Buddha's day in the absence of writing. A deaf and dumb person nowadays can at least learn to read, but in the Buddha's day there were no books; so if they were deaf and dumb whence would they derive, whence would they learn, the Teaching? It would be very difficult indeed. But I think a broader reason why disabled persons were not admitted into the bhikshu sangha was that bhikshus after all depended on alms; that was their regular means of support; and a disabled person would very often not be able to work, not be able to support himself, and might be tempted to join the Sangha simply in order to be supported. I think that is the reason. Because there is also another provision that if you become disabled after joining the Sangha, you may remain a member of the Sangha; you do not have to leave; you are not expelled, because you have obviously entered for other reasons. But even today, in Theravada Buddhist countries, disabled or deformed persons are not ordained as monks. The Mahayana view was rather different, and the Bodhisattva ordination was given even to disabled or deformed people. Obviously, that is more in keeping, in a sense, with the spirit of the Mahayana, one might say, the spirit of the Bodhisattva ideal.

Dharmadhara: This comes from the reference to people possessing all senses, on p.[15]. Looking at the Order, it is noticeable that some Order Members have moderate physical handicaps and have had them for a long time, for example there is one with diabetes, and there is one in a wheelchair; there is one who had childhood cataracts and so on, and polio; and, of course, there is yourself who were confined to bed a lot when you were young?

S.: Ah, that was a medical mistake, it seems! Anyway.

Dharmadhara: Anyway, I wondered whether, rather than being a handicap, these sorts of things may not even be an incentive to overcoming them, and also perhaps facing death. I was

also speculating whether the proportion of those with these sorts of things was even a bit higher in the Order than outside, in a group of young people.

S.: I think one could perhaps conduct a survey and try to find out. I am doubtful about that, though. I think people outside the Movement suffer at least as many ailments as those within probably more, I would have thought, though I won't be too sure of that. With regard to this question of flawed sensory equipment, I don't think, from a purely spiritual point of view, that deprivation of this or that sense or this or that physical ability would necessarily make much difference, spiritually speaking. As you say, it may in some cases act as an incentive. This is obviously looking at things from a quite different point of view from that of the early Sangha, which did not want people in the monastic order who were just joining it for the sake of a means of support. But one could say that sometimes people with severe physical handicap become very embittered. They become very angry, even; they may feel, 'Why do I have to suffer in this way? Why should I have been born with this handicap?' and that may be quite a hindrance to the spiritual life. So one would have to look at both sides of the question and try to discover, perhaps, whether a physical handicap was more likely to act as an incentive to the spiritual life or [51] more likely to constitute a hindrance due to the bitterness that it gave rise to. Of course, another thing we must remember is that I think a lot of handicapped people people who are handicapped from the point of view of other, supposedly normal, people do not experience their handicap as a handicap, in the way that people without the handicap would think. I have known, for instance, lame boys I remember this in India, in Kalimpong who never thought of themselves as handicapped. They can't play football quite as well as boys who are not handicapped, but so what? It is just that they don't play football quite so well. They might even play it better than some boys who do not have a handicap. So they do not label themselves as it were handicapped; not as it were left to their own resources. They are quite aware of a difference, even of a relative inferiority in certain respects, but it does not seem really to make any overall difference to their personalities or their general attitude towards life. Unless, of course, it is, say, very painful or something of that kind.

Dharmadhara: In your own case, do you think your mistaken handicap was an incentive?

S.: Looking back, I do sometimes think that I probably would not have read nearly so much probably if I had not been confined to bed for several years. I might not have developed a habit of reading, and that might have had all sorts of consequences; one just does not know. It could even be that there would not have been the emphasis on literature that perhaps there is at present in the FWBO; there might have been an emphasis on something quite different, who knows? It is very difficult to tell. I know that, even before I was discovered to be allegedly handicapped in that particular way and had to be confined to bed, I was a reader. I don't think I can remember learning to read; as far back as my memory goes, I could read. So perhaps things would not have been all that different. Again, it is quite difficult to say; quite impossible to say.

Vessantara: It is five to nine; we have still got about 8 or 9 questions. Tejamitra had more medical questions.

S.: He should ask Dharmadhara, not me!

Tejamitra: In connection with Right Juncture, on the page discussing ..., Gampopa says that 'as a human being means to have [...] male [...] organs.' We were discussing vasectomy in this

connection. Would you advise against vasectomy? Could this affect even meditation?

S.: I have been consulted about this, because several Order Members have had vasectomies, both in India and in Britain. Opinions differ. Some people say that a vasectomy does have a psychological effect on a man; others say that it does not. Those whom I know who have had it though only comparatively recently do say that it does not have any psychological effect. I must say I am not so sure. I think perhaps there are too few cases within my personal knowledge for me to be able to generalize in any case. But I must say that I do not feel too happy I don't feel in a position to be able actually to advise someone strongly that he should not have a vasectomy, but on the other hand I certainly do not feel I can encourage people to have vasectomies. I think that is my position at the moment. I am afraid I can't give any very definite advice or guidance, therefore, on this particular topic.

Tejamitra: There is another part of the question. We had a further discussion on sexual promiscuity. I wondered if you could give us any thoughts you might have had.

[52]

S.: Before you ask that question the reason why men in the Order, whether in India or in the UK had vasectomies was, of course, that they did not want to run the risk of offspring. In the case of the Indian Order Members it is because they have got two or three children already; they don't want to have large families. In the case of Order Members in England, in one case he does not want to have a larger family, but in the other cases I think there were two, perhaps they are not married, they have girl friends, and neither they nor their girl friends want to run the risk of pregnancy. So this is really what has spurred them on. Anyway, let's have the other question.

Tejamitra: In connection with that, I wondered if you could tell us any thoughts you had had on AIDS.

S.: Well, here again perhaps you would do better to consult Dharmadhara because I sometimes have to cross-examine Dharmadhara about these matters and extract whatever professional information or knowledge he has. But in the Order Office we have been collecting information on this; we have quite a lot of cuttings from newspapers and magazines, and I believe Dharmadhara has been taking a good bit of interest in the matter, for obvious reasons. I suggest maybe you should get together with him, because he certainly has more factual information and knowledge about the matter than I do. Better to go to the source. But I think, more generally, that we do right to be concerned about the matter, because there is no doubt that AIDS is on the increase in Britain as elsewhere, and I think it is apparently such a dreadful thing that we should take all possible precautions against it. It may well be that people within the Movement itself will have to think very seriously, and perhaps curtail the sexual freedom that some of them have been used to over perhaps the last few years.

Prasannasiddhi: This question relates to the arising of the bodhicitta. Can one have an experience of the bodhicitta, and then that experience fade, or does the experience of the bodhicitta remain vividly with one after it has occurred, as if one had entered another dimension?

S.: This, of course, raises the question of levels or degrees of bodhicitta, just as there is a

question, of course, of levels or degrees of Going for Refuge. I would say that inasmuch as the arising of the bodhicitta is what I call the positive, other-regarding aspect of the Going for Refuge, one has the same degrees, the same levels in regard to the bodhicitta that one has with regard to the Going for Refuge. You remember one has a provisional Going for Refuge, an effective Going for Refuge, and a real Going for Refuge; and the real Going for Refuge is tantamount to Stream Entry. So that arising of the bodhicitta which is tantamount to, or which corresponds to, the real Going for Refuge, which in its turn is tantamount to or corresponds to the opening of the Dharma Eye and so on from that arising of the bodhicitta one cannot fall back. But if the arising of the bodhicitta corresponds to the provisional or merely the effective Going for Refuge, of course that experience of the arising of the bodhicitta can fade. One does find in Mahayana sutras references to the bodhicitta arising but then, due to its weakness, subsiding; so it corresponds to what I have called the provisional bodhicitta, one might say, or the effective bodhicitta, merely; not the real bodhicitta, not the real relative bodhicitta, that is.

Prasannasiddhi: So it is not quite so black and white in terms of either you have experienced it or you haven't?

S.: Not unless you make this further division into different degrees or different levels of the arising of the bodhicitta itself, as you do in the case of Going for Refuge. Someone may read a Mahayana sutra and have a very strong [53] feeling of arising of the bodhicitta in the sense that he or she may have a very strong feeling of compassion and desire to devote themselves to Enlightenment for the sake of all living beings; it can be very genuine while it lasts. But it may not last, it fades. So it is not that the experience has not been genuine, has not been sincere; it has been; but it has only been a limited experience of the Arising of the bodhicitta, only what I call the provisional or, perhaps, just about, the effective arising. But nothing more than that. Not a real arising.

Prasannasiddhi: Does that mean, in a sense, you would never really know that the bodhicitta had arisen, because you wouldn't know whether your altruistic attitude would die out?

S.: Well, the same applies here that I said the other evening with regard to Stream Entry: in a sense, you can't be sure, or even if you feel sure within yourself, you cannot demonstrate the genuineness of your attainment to others, except by the fact that you persist in it, and perhaps they get to know you over the years sufficiently well that they can, in a manner of speaking, share your inner experience and not just have to go by the external expression of that, in the form of a particular pattern of behaviour. So I think the same applies to the arising of the bodhicitta. You may not be sure yourself first whether it is the real thing or not real in the sense of permanent; but you may know, or start to have your suspicions, so to speak, only after a while, when you find it isn't fading, it isn't becoming less; if anything it is increasing, it is growing stronger, and it seems likely to continue that way. There is a very lengthy discussion, a number of discussions, in the Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines about how an irreversible Bodhisattva is to be known as an irreversible Bodhisattva. This is the same sort of question within the context specifically of the Bodhisattva Path as distinguished, of course, from the path of the Arhant. But the general principle involved is, of course, the same.

Gerry: It seems a bit odd to me that in the Theravada tradition there is a quite definite point ... Stream Entry, but in the Mahayana texts there is not, whereas as regards the arising of the bodhicitta I would have thought it would be a classification ... the arising of the bodhicitta.

Would you not?

Tape 5, Side 1

S.: ... takes the Bodhisattva vow; but everyone is well aware that the bodhicitta, in the real sense, has not arisen. So what has happened? Well, howsoever they express it I am not sure how they express it in different countries they can only say that, well, they have taken it provisionally; they have taken the Bodhisattva Precepts; they are 'Bodhisattva in precept' that expression is sometimes used; they are not a Bodhisattva in the sense that the bodhicitta has arisen. They are trying to follow, at least externally, the Bodhisattva way of life, but the inner spirit, what gives life to that way of life, that is to say the bodhicitta, has not itself actually arisen. I think they are very well aware of the distinction.

Vessantara: Barry, a question about Stream Entry.

Barry: How can a Stream Entrant be always positive when he is still subject to the fetters of ill-will and craving?

S.: Well, obviously he can't be, because he

Barry: I understood that that was one characteristic of Stream Entry, that you were always positive under whatever circumstances.

[54]

S.: Not if by 'always positive' you mean that all unskillful mental states have been eradicated, because in that case the Stream Entrant would not be a Stream Entrant, he would be an Arhant, if not a Bodhisattva. So there must be something unskillful, something of the nature of greed, hatred and delusion, persisting. But it may be very subtle; it may not be easily detectable in his external behaviour, because he certainly would have overcome the grosser forms, the grosser expressions, of greed, hatred and delusion. But certainly there are subtle forms still left to be removed, represented by the seven whole fetters that he has not yet broken. So, yes, he is emotionally positive, but not completely. To our limited vision, our limited experience of emotional positivity, he may seem to be extremely emotionally positive; he even may seem to be completely emotionally positive. But in his heart of hearts, he is not. There is still a residue of unskillful mental states.

Vessantara: Prasannasiddhi has a question about klesa and jneya.

Prasannasiddhi: Yes, Bhante, I am not sure if you have dealt with this anywhere else. I will ask the question anyway. There are four subdivisions. (1) Are klesas more fundamental than jneyas? (2) Is the force of the klesas stronger than the force of the jneyas? (3) Can they be separated in the way done on p.6, para.5? (4) Could you say more about jneya?

S.: Right, take them one by one.

Prasannasiddhi: (1) Are klesas more fundamental than jneyas?

S.: It depends what one means by fundamental. In a sense, they are less fundamental than jneya, inasmuch as jneya is removed at a more advanced level of spiritual development. The

jneyavarana is removed only by the Bodhisattva, not by the Arhant. So, in that sense, jneya is more fundamental, in the sense of being something that it is more difficult to eradicate than klesa. This at least is the standard traditional view. So if something is more difficult to eradicate it must be in a sense more fundamental. So jneya is more difficult to eradicate than klesa, therefore in that sense jneya is the more fundamental of the two. Then?

Prasannasiddhi: (2) Is the force of the klesas stronger than the force of the jneyas?

S.: Well, from what I said in response to the first question, it follows that the klesas are in fact less powerful, because the jneya is more difficult to eradicate.

Prasannasiddhi: (3) Can they be separated in the way done on p.6, para.5?

S.: I am not referring to that, but traditionally they are separable, inasmuch as it is possible to remove the klesavarana without having removed the jneyavarana. That is at least the traditional view. Whether it is really sustainable is quite another matter, but the traditional view is that, yes, they are separable in the sense that the one can be removed, i.e. the klesavarana, without the other having been removed, i.e. the jneyavarana. Prasannasiddhi: (4) Could you say more about jneya?

S.: Ah, jneya I have actually said quite a bit about this on various occasions, but briefly, jneya is that which is knowable; in other words, that which is capable of being an object of knowledge as distinct from the subject of knowledge. Therefore, the veil of jneya or the knowables represents the veil of objectivity as [55] distinguished from subjectivity; it is the veil over Reality which is constituted by the subject/object duality itself. This is what the jneyavarana really means, putting it in a few words; the fact that one apprehends things as objects, in contradistinction to the perceiving subject. This is a veil over Reality itself, over Ultimate Reality, and one needs to remove that veil as well as the veil of klesas, according to the Mahayana; as well as the veil of moral or emotional defilements.

Prasannasiddhi: So would the klesas be subjective?

S.: One could say that well, in a sense one could say that the klesa represented the subjective and the jneya the objective, but inasmuch as they were previously said to be separable one perhaps can't really make that point, because the subjective and the objective are really not separable. Therefore, one could say that, along with the jneya, a subtle klesa does still persist. But that is perhaps going a little beyond tradition itself.

Prasannasiddhi: Do they bear any relation to emotion and intellect?

S.: Very broadly, yes. Guenther sometimes translates klesa as what is it? (Voices prompting.) Conflicting emotionality, yes. You could say that jneya, if one cared to use that sort of terminology, is alienated intellectuality; you could put it in that way. But perhaps that is paraphrasing rather than translating.

Vessantara: Now some questions arising out of Gampopa's ... about border tribes.

S.: About border tribes?

Vessantara: Yes, arising indirectly. We'll start with Gerry.

Gerry Corr: Can you think of modern equivalents, either gross or subtle, to the 'members of the border tribes' that Gampopa mentions as one of the eight unfavourable conditions?

S.: One has perhaps to ask what Gampopa meant by border tribes; probably just tribal people living in the jungle, living in the forest, and subsisting mainly by hunting, perhaps by theft, and therefore subsisting largely by killing animals. So birth among such people would not be regarded as very favourable from the point of view of following the Dharma.

Gerry: Excuse me: I was talking to somebody and I understood that it was a reference to the Huns, who

S.: That is a possibility, but we do get references in the Pali Canon to the border lands and the border tribes, and that was some time, I think, before the Huns. No, I think that the reference is to simple or primitive tribes of people living in the jungle without much in the way of culture, perhaps, and certainly living mainly by the killing of animals. I don't know whether we have any real equivalent to that in modern life. Well, you could even say that the whole population, in a sense, is a sort of border tribe! But maybe that is carrying it a bit too far.

Pavel: Did not the Tibetan monks kill animals?

S.: They did, they did. Well, not all of them; they had butchers, so they regarded that as in a way permissible, though I would regard that as a contradiction in terms, really. You can't hand over the responsibility of your consumption of meat, karmically speaking, to the people who actually slaughter it for you. You are, at least, indirectly responsible. The Tibetans argue that in Tibet there is only a limited food supply, only certain grains grow there, there is very little in the way [56] of vegetables; they say that they are more or less compelled to take animal products, including meat. Though I must say not many Tibetans become vegetarians on coming to India. They seem to find that quite difficult. I don't feel very happy with the rationalizations of any Eastern Buddhists who eat meat, especially not with those of the Thais and the Burmese, who could easily because there are plenty of vegetables and so on in Thailand and Burma. Anyway, that is quite a separate question. There is quite a good little book by Kapleau on Buddhism and vegetarianism, and I recommend that to anyone who is interested in the subject.

: This is about culture, in three parts. (1) Do you have a definition of culture? (2) In your opinion, what is the most civilized culture in the world? (3) Within Britain do you think there is a very high degree of culture?

S.: Let's have those in turn again.

: (1) Do you have a definition of culture?

S.: Well, there are definitions of culture. I think I have given one in several lectures 'Buddhism and Art', have I? I think I would just refer you to the dictionary here, for a straightforward definition that is, a good dictionary and possibly to an encyclopedia. I think it is not easy to summarize what culture means in just a few words.

: (2) In your opinion, what is the most civilized culture in the world?

S.: I think 'civilized culture' is probably what is the expression? it is almost a contradiction in terms, because culture and civilization are usually distinguished. Culture pertains more to the individual; civilization more to the society at large. Again, consult one's dictionary. One could speak of a culture in the sense of permitting or making it more easy for individuals to become cultured; one could perhaps think in those terms, but I think a 'cultured civilization' or 'civilized culture' would not be an appropriate expression. But there is still the third question!

: Just with regard to the second question, we were discussing the level of culture within a society, say England or India, and there was quite a lot of discussion. Some people thought that, for example, India overall had a higher level of culture and civilization in the way people related to each other generally ... etc. But then the amount of violence that they experience within the Hindu society, people ... as being ... waste ... a high degree of civilization, and ...

S.: Well, of course one has to define culture, define civilization, and draw a distinction between the two, certainly. Also it is not easy to generalize, whatever way one may define culture or may define civilization. If one thinks of relations between human beings as part of culture, as no doubt one should, it is true in a sense that in India people do behave towards one another, one could say, very often, in a better way than people behave in, say, Britain. But that has its limits. They might behave better towards one another, provided they all belong to the same castes or group of castes. They would not behave in that way to someone they considered as an Untouchable; their culture wouldn't stretch as far as that do you see what I mean? So one has to take that into consideration, too. I don't think you can think in terms of there being one level of culture which is spread out all through India or all through Britain. I think that, usually, what you find is a variable level. You find even pockets of higher or lower culture here and there. I think probably what you would have to look for, say, in India is small [57] groups of people with a higher culture than the people surrounding them. Likewise in Britain. And then perhaps you could compare two or more of those cultural elites. I don't think you could properly compare masses of people, the populations as a whole. I don't think one would possibly have the equipment to do that, to evaluate in that way. But possibly you could find in India small groups of people who were even more highly cultured than the corresponding small groups in Britain, in certain respects, or vice versa. Do you see what I mean? You might find that India, say, was superior in musical culture; you might say that in England, or in some parts of England, in certain groups, there was a superiority in respect of the visual arts, that aspect of culture. Or, say, in family life, or whatever. But I don't think there could be an overall sweeping generalization.

Dhammarati: At the end of the seminar you did generalize... Japan, for instance, and even with China, and I think you referred to Japan as in some respects higher, which ... surprising, because it always seemed that Japanese architecture, Japanese painting, Japanese pottery, Japanese poetry, as being very sophisticated, and ...

S.: Well, that is all true. But human nature is a very complex thing, and complex to the point of contradictoriness. There are even now people in Britain who were in Japanese concentration camps; you try talking to them about Japanese culture, and you hear what they say! They didn't have much of an experience of Japanese culture. On the other hand, I can remember, when I was in Singapore this was after VJ Day there were Japanese prisoners of

war around, and we had them doing work around the camp; and I remember there were two young Japanese officers who used to come and just station themselves at the entrance to our tents whenever someone happened to have on Western classical music. They were especially fond of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart! But then again one finds that apparently the commandants of concentration camps in Germany, even extermination centres, used to while away their free time listening to classical music. Kapleau has written about that; that was his experience. So, again, human nature is very complex, and a high degree of culture, in a sense, especially artistic culture, is not necessarily incompatible with a rather undeveloped moral sense. So I still actually think that there is a very strong streak of barbarism in the Japanese national character. I think that the fact that there is that streak of barbarism does not invalidate their culture as such; I don't think that the one as it were cancels out the other, much less still makes the other impossible. If you think how the Japanese behaved in China don't forget they invaded China, within my lifetime, not within yours and think how they behaved in Manchukuo, as they called it; think how they behaved in South-east Asia they are not loved in South-east Asia by anybody. Nonetheless, yes, they produced wonderful art, wonderful culture, in a sense; wonderful poetry, pottery, all the rest. So, yes, human nature is quite complex. It is a question of either/or. Kierkegaard, the great existentialist philosopher, saw the final antithesis in human nature, in human life, as between the ethical and the aesthetic. Anyway, I mention that just in passing just to make the point that there is not necessarily a difference between, let us say, artistic culture and ethical culture, but even an actual conflict, according to him at least. So that is the final decision you have to make, whether you are going to go for the aesthetic or the ethical. Some of our own Friends, within the Movement, have faced that sort of choice their music, or the Dharma; their painting, or the Dharma. Not that painting or music are incompatible with the Dharma, but perhaps you can integrate music or painting with the Dharma only when you have as it were made your choice between the Dharma and whatever else it is of an artistic nature, and decided for the Dharma. Do you see what I mean?

[58]

Dhammarati: ...religion and art, for instance; it seems to me what you are suggesting would be a quality of the ... artistic experience as so tied up with spiritual experience and ... experience, that I don't understand how there is any conflict between the aesthetic state of being and the ethical state of being

S.: I think there can be a conflict, but I think in the case of those who have reconciled the conflict they have reconciled it because, well, in a sense the ethical, in a sense the spiritual in a very broad sense, is more important to them than the aesthetic in a narrow sense. In The Religion of Art I think it is in The Religion of Art I have referred to Tennyson's poem, The Palace of Art; that represents the aesthetic, or aestheticism, in the narrower sense, the sense which must be rejected in the interests of the spiritual life. But once you have made your primary choice, as it were, then you find that the aesthetic is not incompatible with the spiritual. But it is as though as long as you see the aesthetic as separate and having separate claims, you can't make a synthesis between the two.

Dhammarati: Do you think that great or good art is possible without including the spiritual? Can you really have the ... ?

S.: No, I personally don't think you can. Because I think to produce great art you need a degree of honesty, a degree of clarity, even intelligence, which is quite incompatible with

aestheticism in the narrow sense.

Dhammarati: So where does the apparent conflict come from? Why ... ?

S.: Well, I think the key (very briefly) is contained in The Palace of Art, when you use art in a sort of self-indulgent way, as a source of agreeable sensations, in a quite individualistic and ultimately even selfish way. I think that kills art itself in the long run.

: (3) In Britain, do you think there is a very high degree of culture, or what are your general impressions of culture in Britain? That is, in the context of

S.: I am not really in a position to generalize, because I don't go around looking at much. It is quite a big question. I would say that, if I am to be quite honest, there is really very little culture in Britain. There is probably very little culture in the West. What culture there is is just a survival from former times. There seems to be very, very little live contemporary culture of a kind that finds expression in people's lives and affects people's lives. Look at architecture look at the sort of houses people live in. That is one of the basic artistic forms: architecture. Well, if it is not too bad in that respect, at least you've got decent red brick and decent red tiles! So that's not bad. But, well, to go to the big cities, you've got other things too, unfortunately. But as I said, look at just the houses people live in, just for a start. So can you really speak of people being very cultured if they consent to live in houses like that, or if people generally think it's OK to live in houses like what about these high-rise flats, these tower blocks? I don't see any evidence of culture there at all; just the opposite. I know modern architects would not agree with me, but then I think modern architects have got it wrong. I agree with anyone with Prince Charles I really chuckled to myself when he made his now famous remarks about a certain proposed building which the architects had designed, that he had seen. So that is just to give a start. Look at the films. Film is such a wonderful medium. I quite like that particular medium, but it is very difficult to find a decent film to go and see. What sort of culture do we have in that area, that respect? I hope I'm not treading on too dangerous ground, treading on any corns, in fact! But I am afraid I don't see much [59] evidence of culture in people's [lives] there is quite a bit in the museums, but I think that is not enough. I think it has got to be actually in people's lives. This is one reason also that I think we have got to give more attention in the Movement itself to the places where we live, at least try to decorate them in a harmonious and aesthetically pleasing way, a way that does promote a certain positive mental state, have pleasing artefacts. Look at the dreadful furniture we usually have to put up with dreadful pictures on the walls, dreadful programmes on TV and radio. No, there is not all that much culture, I'm afraid. Sorry to sound so pessimistic; it probably sounds like a sort of Buddhist version of Muggeridge or something! (laughter) but this is honestly what I really think and feel. I think we get used to this rather sordid and uninspiring absence of culture from our lives. As I said, it is not enough to have it in the museums and be able to go along and visit a gallery and go to an exhibition. That is a confession of failure. You should be living in the midst of the museum, as it were, or the art gallery, like the ancient Greeks did; not have an art gallery tucked away in some corner of the town where very few people ever go. So I am sorry to be so pessimistic or take such a gloomy view. I think things are pretty much the same all over the industrialized or semi-industrialized world.

Vessantara: It is nearly half past nine; are you happy to carry on?

S.: Perhaps we should keep the remaining questions for tomorrow, because tomorrow's questions will be dealing with this same second chapter, and maybe that will keep a better balance. Right-ho, then: end on that slightly pessimistic note!

[60]

Tape 6, Side 1

Chairman: ... two-thirds of the way through 'The Working Basis', which is the second chapter. Each of the groups has a slightly different ... (bit missing)

Murray Wright: ... influence of Buddhist on Christian scriptures... So what influence do you think that the Buddhist scriptures had on Christian scriptures, particularly the New Testament? For example, the prodigal son and the parable of the [rain cloud]?

S.: This question was much discussed at the end of the last century [and the] beginning of this, and several books were written on it. I think it can be said that, in those days, possibly, some people tended to exaggerate the influence of Buddhism on the Christian New Testament, let us say. I think that nowadays it would be generally [con]ceded that there are probably some traces of Buddhist teaching in the New Testament, in most cases in the form of the parables though even that can't be pressed too much, because in the case of one of those that you mentioned, the rain cloud, that is a pretty universal symbol, one might say. The parable of the Prodigal Son, as compared with the prodigal son and the seeking father, is possibly a genuine example of actual influence, one might say. But on the whole I think the consensus of scholarly opinion now is not to make very much of the influence of Buddhism on the beginnings of Christianity as represented by the Gospels.

Dhammarati: In The Three Jewels you talk about Buddhism modifying the ... Christianity through Neoplatonism as well as through ...

S.: Ah. This, of course, is at a much later stage. Yes: the question of the influence of Buddhism possibly through Neoplatonism is quite another matter, quite another question. One of the greatest of the early Christian thinkers was Origen; he was one of the pupils of Ammonius Saccas, as was Plotinus, and it is believed that Ammonius Saccas, who can be regarded as both the father, so to speak, or at least the grandfather, of Neoplatonism and also as the grandfather of the type of theology represented, on the Christian side, by Origen, is believed to have been subject to oriental, specifically Indian, influences. It has been speculated that his surname, Saccas which some scholars explain as meaning 'porter' actually is a corruption of Sakya, and he may have been a Buddhist; though that is not definitely known. But, of course, it is known that, in Alexandria at that time and earlier, there were Buddhists; this is known quite definitely, because they are referred to in a very well-known passage by one of the other fathers of the church, that is to say Clement of Alexandria, who refers in one of his writings to brachmanoi and sramanoi being in Alexandria, which is obviously the brahmanas and sramanas of Buddhist tradition. So one has, as a definite historical fact, sramanas and brahmanas present in Alexandria. One has Ammonius Saccas strongly under oriental, let us say Indian, influence. And one certainly finds Plotinus and Origen as both of them disciples or pupils of Ammonius Saccas. Origen's teachings were in some respects condemned later as heretical, but it is perhaps a bit paradoxical that the teachings of Plotinus, who was of course a pagan, a non-Christian, strongly influenced many of the Church fathers, and strongly influenced medieval Christianity indirectly. For instance,

we find that Plotinus strongly influenced St Augustine; St Augustine is one of the primary influences on the development of Christian thought, Christian theology. We find very strong traces of Neoplatonism in the writings of a mystic usually called the pseudo-Dionysius, the author of the *Mystical Theology* and so on. So this is why I say, or I claim, that through Neoplatonism, whether through its [61] sources or through its later influence, the rigour as it were of Christianity was considerably modified. Similarly in the case of Islam: I have been looking into this in greater detail more recently. There seem to be two branches of Sufism, a northern and a southern, and the northern overspread the area mainly of Iran, especially eastern Iran, and parts of what are now Afghanistan and Central Asia, where, of course, immediately before and even later, to some extent, there was a very strong Buddhist presence. I personally believe, though I have not gone into it yet in sufficient depth, that the northern Sufis at least took over quite a lot from Buddhism, both in their practice and in their mystical thought. Just to give a very simple example, the Sufis who are called dervishes or darwishes, and who are sort of religious mendicants, were characterized by I don't know the Persian or Arabic term, but in English it is translated as 'a patched cloak' or 'a cloak of patches'. Well, it seems pretty obvious where that came from. Some of them carried bowls and staffs also. So it does seem that, through northern Sufism at least, there was a strong influence of Buddhism and perhaps of Hinduism too, at a later stage, on Islam, or at least on certain branches or certain aspects of it. But this is a very big subject that still awaits investigation.

Chairman: Now another question from Barry.

Barry: Bhante, given the high possibility of a nuclear war at some point in the future, do you think that the FWBO should put more of its resources into establishing the Dharma in countries less likely to be affected by a nuclear war?

S.: Hm. Assuming, of course, that we can identify those countries. Perhaps we can't identify them with any certainty. It looks as though there is going to be a proliferation of nuclear powers in the foreseeable future, so I don't think that we can sort of select particular countries to develop the FWBO in, in the complete certainty that they are going to be nuclear-free. But certainly it seems at present that there are certain countries that are more likely to be free than others; so if our resources permit perhaps we should give attention to that consideration. We have thought already in fact, some action has been taken in this respect in terms of having complete sets of our tapes and publications as widely distributed as possible. I think that, in New Zealand, for instance, at present, they do have either a complete or a virtually complete set of everything of this nature, and perhaps we should try to deposit caches of such material all over the place. Even if we can't deposit Order Members everywhere, at least we can deposit our publications and our tapes and so on.

Barry: Do you think it might be more important to establish the Dharma in those countries even than in the West in our long-term ... survival?

S.: I think we would have to study and assess the situation very carefully, first of all visavis the likelihood of certain countries being less affected by any possible nuclear catastrophe, and secondly the extent to which it would be possible at present actually to establish the Dharma in those countries, as distinct from merely transplanting a number of Order Members there. The countries of South America, I think, would be in the long run a very favourable ground for the spread of the FWBO; likewise perhaps China, but it is rather difficult to get there at the moment, if you see what I mean! Even if we could get there, perhaps we don't have people

equipped to function there. So you don't want to say, 'Send people to South America' or 'Send them to China,' assuming you can get in, and they are just not able to do anything there because the situation there is not ripe; they would just be stranded there. Perhaps they would be more usefully employed working in what would appear to be more dangerous areas dangerous in respect of the [62] likelihood of those areas being involved in nuclear conflict. But it is not an easy decision to take. It is not easy to see one's way. But at least we can distribute our publications and tapes as widely as possible; yes, and distribute Order Members too as widely as possible, assuming that they have a fruitful field to work in fairly quickly.?)

Murray Wright: Bhante, you may be interested to know that I heard that by the year 2000 the estimate is 70% more Catholics will be running(?) South America.

S.: So are you suggesting we should keep away from South America, or that we should concentrate on South America?

Murray Wright: I am just saying it is a real growth area for the Catholic Church.

S.: I don't know whether it is a growth area or merely a multiplication area! (laughter) if you see what I mean; because their Catholicism, at least on certain levels, would seem to be of an order that the present Pope at least would perhaps not wholeheartedly approve of. They seem to have mixed up their Catholicism with all sorts of survivals of pre-Christian creeds. I would not mind having a look at South America myself, but it seems very unlikely that I shall be able actually to get around to it; but I think South America, and also Central America, is a very interesting place. We have at present one Order Member of South American origin. Also it is not just a question of South America; there is the whole question of the Spanish-speaking area. Spanish is, I believe, the third world language, after English and Chinese taking Chinese as one language. So Spanish is of very great importance. It is of importance, of course, in Europe itself, and it is of importance in South America mainly and a few other places well, South and Central America. And parts of Africa, too.

Murray Wright: My impression has been that they seem to quite take to Tibetan Buddhism.

S.: Well, one could think in terms of a superficial resemblance between Catholicism and Tibetan Buddhism, but on the other hand if it is so similar why should you be attracted by it?

Chairman: The next question is from Johnny.

Johnny: Bhante, we were discussing, in the second chapter, the human realm, where one is able to develop compassion towards all sentient beings. I would like to clear up something which I have never really understood on the nature of compassion: why you say in Peace Is a Fire that one does not feel compassion towards beings because they suffer, one simply feels compassion. Could you throw any light on this?

S.: I am just being a little paradoxical. I am really saying here that compassion in the highest sense is not a conditioned phenomenon. But one can explain it in more simple terms than that. According to Buddhist teaching, compassion is basically metta, karuna is basically metta. What you are endowed with primarily, or what you develop, is metta is good will towards all sentient beings. But when you come into contact, or when that metta comes into contact with suffering, then it becomes transformed into compassion. So it is not that when

you come into contact with beings who are suffering you develop compassion as though from a completely clear start, as it were; it is not that, up till that moment, you have been in a state of emotional blankness or neutrality, but when you come into contact with people who suffer, then you develop compassion. No: it is that, to [63] begin with, you are full of metta anyway. If you come into contact with people ;who are happy, the metta is transformed into sympathetic joy. If you come into contact with people who are suffering, people who are unhappy, the metta is transformed into compassion. But, going even beyond that, of course, in the case of the Bodhisattva's compassion it is said that whereas the compassion of the worldling, the puthujjana or privajjana(?), has beings in the real sense, or beings as imagined really to exist, as its object, and whereas the compassion of those following the Hinayana path has dharmas as its object, in the case of the Bodhisattva the object of his compassion is sunyata. So one can look at the saying in Peace Is a Fire from both these points of view, the more simple and also the more profound. But basically I am just being a bit paradoxical.

Chairman: The next question is from Prakasha.

Prakasha: The Torch of Certainty gives four preliminary meditations to the four Foundation Yogas. Would you recommend doing these before starting the Foundations?

S.: Just read out what they are.

Prakasha: I think it's the meditation on the precious human body, on the shortcomings of samsara, on impermanence, and on karma and its result.

S.: These are four standard meditations. In the text which I rendered, the Tapedelam(?), from which we take the text of the prostration practice and so on as we do them in the FWBO, these four practices are mentioned. They are sometimes called general foundations; and, yes, they are certainly useful and, yes, it would be useful therefore to do them before doing the Foundation Yogas. That is the general tradition. But one could say that those four practices are not just practices in the sense of exercises that you do either on their own account by themselves or before other practices or other exercises; they really represent attitudes that you should be cultivating all the time just crystallized into those particular exercises. For instance, you ought to be all the time mindful of the fact of impermanence, and not just on certain occasions when you do a particular practice or a particular exercise.

Chairman: OK: the last of the questions left over from the previous session. The first is also from Prakasha.

Prakasha: It is quite a long one. While the ideal of the FWBO has been stated as 'the transformation of both self and world', the ideal of early Buddhism seems to be more liberation from [64] the world. It emphasizes the renunciation of worldly life, 'Going Forth', and the monastic ideal, and makes only limited provision for lay people. There is little of the emphasis that we find in the FWBO on the 'Dharma worker', working to change and improve society and creating a new society. (1) Is this a limitation in the traditional formulation of the Dharma? Is Buddhism one-sided in this respect?

S.: Let us take those preliminary points you made one by one first, before the question.

Prakasha: While the ideal of the FWBO has been stated as 'the transformation of both self and

world', the ideal of early Buddhism seems to be more liberation from the world. It emphasizes the renunciation of worldly life, Going Forth and the monastic ideal, and makes only a limited provision for lay people.

S.: It depends to some extent what you mean by 'early Buddhism'. If we look at the Pali Canon carefully, we can see that some teachings appear to belong to an earlier period than others, and it would seem that the emphasis on monasticism in the narrow, not to say rigid, sense, came after the time of the Buddha. It would seem that even though, yes, there was in a way an emphasis on monasticism, it was not quite so pronounced, in fact not nearly so pronounced, as it was in the days of the Buddha, and it did not necessarily become as pronounced as it was, say, in the case of the later Theravada, in the case of all the schools. For instance, just recently this last week I have been rereading the Buddhacarita of Asvaghosa. According to the translator, Asvaghosa was a follower of the Mahasanghikas, and it was the Mahasanghikas, I think it was, who provided to a great extent a sort of cradle for the development of the Mahayana. Certainly Asvaghosa himself was not a Mahayanist there is no trace of Mahayanistic teaching in the Buddhacarita but I was noticing, it was quite interesting, that Asvaghosa in this work, when dealing with the various conversions of lay people which the Buddha effected, seemed to go almost out of his way to emphasize that it didn't really make any difference whether you were a monk or a layman, you could still gain Enlightenment. He mentions this in connection with the conversion of Yasha, in connection with the conversion of Anathapindika, in connection with the conversion of King Sudhodana, who became apparently a Stream Entrant while continuing to live in the palace, and so on. He gives quite a number of instances. And, as I said, he almost goes out of his way to make this point. Once he makes it in the very language of the Dhammapada: that if one is full of truth and righteousness, even though one is richly adorned, one is a brahmana, one is a sramana, one is a bhikkhu. So it would seem that monasticism in the very one-sided sense which later developed was not the type of monasticism, if one can use that term at all, that prevailed at the time of the Buddha. Yes, there was a lot of Going Forth, but those who Went Forth and those who lived together in friendly association were not quite monks in the later full cenobitical sense. Do you see what I mean? Therefore, one cannot really speak of a very one-sided emphasis on monasticism in the case of early Buddhism if by that one means what, so far as we can make out, was the Buddha's own teaching, the Buddha's own practice. There was not so great a difference between the monk and the layman as afterwards came to be the case. Nonetheless, I think one has to agree that there wasn't such a great emphasis on the transformation of the world that we do have in the FWBO. I think there were definite reasons for that. Probably, in the first place, in many respects, the world in which the Buddha lived and worked, so to speak, was not in such need of transformation, not in such great need of transformation; for reasons, perhaps, that one does not need to go into. It seems to have been widely recognized that life in all its aspects needed to be based on the Dharma, and in any case, in a number of suttas, in a number of discourses, the Buddha speaks about the dhammaraja and about the dhammaraja as upholding the 10 silas and the 10 kusaladhammas, and encouraging people to practise them; and this is in fact, one might say in principle, in essence, what transformation of the world consists of. Also the Buddha founded a Sangha not quite in the full later cenobitical sense, but then he did found a spiritual community, and it is the spiritual community that provides the model, as it were, for the wider new society, as we call it. I don't think, therefore, that there is such a great divergence between what was the case in the Buddha's day, in the case of early Buddhism, and what is the case in respect of the FWBO. I think, yes, there is a greater emphasis in the FWBO on transformation of world, but that is because the world of today is so different from the world of the Buddha's day, at least

in India. The world in which we live makes it much more difficult for us to lead the spiritual life as individuals than the world in which the Buddha lived made it difficult for individuals at that time [65] to live the spiritual life. One gets the impression that, in the Buddha's day, the main obstacle was just the family; but nowadays, if the family was the only obstacle, we would be having a very easy time, wouldn't we? Or if it were even the principal obstacle, now, so far as we are all concerned, probably, the family is hardly an obstacle at all; there are lots and lots of other obstacles instead that were hardly known in the Buddha's day. Was there a further question?

Prakasha: Has the Bodhisattva ideal of helping all sentient beings actually led practising Buddhists to a greater social involvement? The example of Dhardo [Rimpoche] in running a school seems rather an exception in the Buddhist world.

S.: I think there are many examples in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism of monks, especially, who were inspired by the Bodhisattva ideal and performed various works of great social utility. Apparently in Japan such monks often constructed roads and bridges; this was a quite common sort of thing for monks in the medieval period to do. I think if one went through books dealing with the history of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism one would find many examples of activities of that sort directly inspired by the Bodhisattva ideal. Of course, we have to be careful and not fall into the pitfall that Christians seem to fall into in many cases of making, say, the Bodhisattva ideal a sort of excuse for social work and social activities in what is in fact a secular sense that is to say, without any real, genuine, underlying spiritual principle or spiritual inspiration.

Dhammarati: Do you think our emphasis on meditation classes and activities of that sort is correct or should we be thinking in terms of making a connection with society, bearing in mind the spiritual principle behind it?

S.: I think that in the West people are much more in need of spiritual help than material help. Nonetheless, I think that we should broaden our approach, and I think big centres and large groups of Order Members, such as we have in east London, should be concerned not just with conducting meditation classes and giving lectures but also doing some (for want of a better term) social work in the neighbourhood, say with old people or deprived people of one kind or another. I have mentioned this from time to time. But whether because they don't have time, or they are not sure how to go about it, people haven't so far responded very much, if in fact at all.

Dhammarati: Do you think there are enough resources in east London to make some kind of allocation of a more social kind ?

S.: I think that, if one took a bit of initiative, one could probably get resources in the form of finance from the appropriate local authority; especially if they had learned to trust you and knew that you were reliable, if you have got a good name.

Dhammarati: Have you thought more specifically about the kind of things that a centre like LBC could be involved in?

S.: I haven't thought very specifically, but I mentioned, for instance, working with old people. A lot of old people live on their own. Well, one could go visiting old people. One could just

see whether there was anything that one could do. I am not thinking of anything very highly organized or high-powered, but thinking more in terms of personal contact and personal help; possibly financed by the local authority under some scheme or other. I don't know what the schemes are, what the possibilities are; someone would need to investigate. But it could be done on a part-time basis, just in one's spare time, if one had any; one could just take just two or three old people in the neighbourhood under one's wing, as it were, just [66] make a point of going to see them once or twice a month and just inquiring if there was anything you could do for them.

Dhammarati: I hope this isn't off the subject, but I thought of the ... Sutta seminar; I must say I did wonder if ... what we do in meditation classes, ... social work would be some use and almost doing door-to-door visits as the Jehovah's Witnesses do, with the kind of ethics laid out in the ... Sutta seminar ... taking Bethnal Green on ...

S.: Well, we have talked about that. I have raised it with the chairmen. The chairmen are supposedly compiling, between them, little leaflets which we can put through doors or hand to people. I think there is something to be said for that sort of intensive approach. In some ways it has been quite an eye-opener, the response that we have got to our Aid for India door-knocking appeals. Of course, there we are asking for help with regard to something of general humanitarian interest; Buddhism does not come into it directly. But I think we could, with that door-knocking appeal experience behind us, perhaps adopt a more direct approach to people in the immediate vicinity of centres; perhaps actually going and visiting them not quite in the way the Jehovah's Witnesses do, I hope, but just in a neighbourly way to begin with.

Dhammarati: If we did that sort of thing, do you think we would be looking for as it were the sort of young ...people to concentrate on ?

S.: You probably wouldn't find the young men at home! You might find the old ladies at home. I think you have to approach whoever you are able to approach, whoever allows you to approach them.

Dhammarati: Do you think it possibly results from justifying ...

S.: I don't know, I have no idea. I think one could only try, and see, and then evaluate after a while.

Prasannasiddhi: This is a bit further afield, Bhante. As the Movement becomes more worldwide, do you envisage it becoming more or less autonomous in each country, or do you envisage considerable interchange between countries, with a central body similar to the Vatican? (Laughter.)

S.: Take that bit by bit.

Prasannasiddhi: As the Movement becomes more worldwide, do you envisage it becoming more or less autonomous in each country?

S.: So far, our principle has been one of local autonomy, from the organizational point of view. This has been very definitely our principle. This is why we have got all these local

autonomous FWBO organizations, all registered charities, scattered throughout the UK. We don't have just one organization. But that is organizational decentralization, and clearly there must be some principle of unity; that is, of course, provided by the Order. So even though one had organizational autonomy not just within each country but even within each Centre one could not have complete autonomy from the spiritual point of view; otherwise you would cease to have a single movement, you would cease to have in fact a single Order. On the other hand, unity cannot be maintained by the imposition of uniformity from above. That is why I think we couldn't have a Vatican not even a little one! This is also why it seems important for Order Members to meet together and gather together and to discuss things together, and clarify things together: so that they can all move forward, so to speak, in the same direction, albeit through their local autonomous organizations. Do you get the picture, as it were?

[67]

So what were the points arising?

Prasannasiddhi: Well, do you envisage ... between countries with central bodies ...?

S: Well in a sense I've answered that, I certainly do envisage as far as possible Order Members, or even Mitras and Friends from different countries coming together from time to time, or Order Members and Mitras and Friends travelling from one country to another, not just confined themselves to knowing their own country, or the Movement in their own country. I think this will contribute quite greatly to the unity of the whole Order.

Prasannasiddhi: Would you see this in quite a wide scale, then ...?

S: Well there are practical considerations, there is the question of money, there is the question of culture. For instance there is not one, as far as I can recollect, of our Indian Order Members who have been to the West. And this is something I think about quite a lot. Quite a few Western Order Members have gone to India and other parts of the East. But I also would very much like to see some Indian Order Members visiting the West for a while, even maybe coming on Tuscanies. But that is very difficult, mainly for two reasons, well first of all there is purely the financial reason. We would probably have to finance it from this end, because I don't know how much it costs someone nowadays to come to Tuscany, but let us say it is about \$2000 altogether if you include the preliminary retreats and all that. That is how many rupees at the current rate?

: Rs.30,000.

S.: That's Rs.30,000; that's a lot of money in India. I doubt if there is a single Indian Order Member who could afford it. There is no question of them saving it up, even over a period of years. So they would have to be financed, at least for the present, from this end, and that no doubt would not always be easy. Then, again, only those who knew English reasonably well would be able to come; though, of course, later, supposing we had a flourishing movement in Germany, an Indian Order Member knowing German could go to Germany it is not impossible. But, for the time being, they would have to know English reasonably well. They would have to be quite mature people who could withstand the culture shock. I am sure, at present, there are at least three or four who could; but there are others who would be really quite overwhelmed by the great social and cultural differences. Nonetheless, I do look forward to the day when Indian Order Members can come to the West, and even come on

Tuscany, spend some time travelling around Centres in the West, seeing the way things are done, getting to know people. This will contribute very much to the unity of the Order. I don't feel really very happy with the idea of the Indian Order Members remaining in relative isolation even though they do have contact with Order Members going over from England and other Western countries, and from Australia and New Zealand, come to that.

Prasannasiddhi: So you wouldn't really see a sort of world headquarters for the Order?

S.: I think there will have to be a sort of world headquarters for the Order. We have it at present at Padmaloka, but how that will develop is difficult to say. There will have to be some world headquarters, not directing the FWBO so much as providing a sort of focal point for the Order as such.

Prasannasiddhi: Isn't that ... what some people envisage the Vatican to be like? ...just as a focal point.

[68]

S.: The differences, I think, are so great that I don't think we are in any danger. Catholicism is essentially an authoritarian religion; Buddhism is not, the FWBO is not. We did talk about this quite a bit on the Chairmen's study retreat, when we studied that book, The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka.

Tape 6, Side 2

And we saw that it was a question for Buddhism, really, in whatsoever form, of reconciling the needs of spiritual autonomy, the spiritual autonomy of the individual, with the harmonious activity, the harmonious functioning, of all those individuals together in the form of a Sangha. We also saw that this was the reason why the Buddha apparently had stressed the importance of the bhikkhus, the members of the Order, meeting together frequently and in large numbers.

Prasannasiddhi: You could perhaps say that it would only appear to be a Vatican if people don't meet together in large numbers.

S.: I don't see why it should even appear to be a Vatican. Why not refer to it as a Potala? No, I think the Vatican has all sorts of unfortunate associations other than its art, perhaps, especially its classical art which should be avoided. Is that the lot?

Chairman: We've got another question from Prasannasiddhi which follows on.

Prasannasiddhi: It has been said that, when giving talks in India, you hit the Dharma home with a sledgehammer, whereas in England your style is gentler and more sophisticated.

S.: Actually, I think I have said it myself!

Prasannasiddhi: Could you explain your reasons for doing so? Are the Indians more able to take it?

S.: Well, in England, at least, I am dealing with much more gentle, sophisticated people! In

India, most or a large percentage of my audience is made up of some very rough customers indeed. I mean, they are all good Buddhists, but they are pretty rough. Sometimes people think that Glaswegians are rough, but you should jolly well go to Maharashtra! Then you would see what real roughness is like. The Glaswegians are gentlemen in comparison aristocrats, one might say! But, no, more seriously, a lot of the people who are involved with our Movement, or involved with Buddhism, or regard themselves as Buddhists in India, who are of the exUntouchable community, are either illiterate [69] or not very literate. They are engaged in all sorts of very menial occupations, very often, rough and dirty occupations; live in very difficult, not to say squalid, conditions, and in some ways are really quite rough. Also, owing to the very nature of the situation I think this is where the sledgehammer bit really comes in they need very strong and very definite guidance. They look for that, they want that, they ask for that. So sometimes one has to put things in a very black and white way, lay down very definite guidelines. They are not looking for subtleties, they are not looking for fine distinctions. For them, I think to a greater extent, or at least in a different way from that of people in the West, the Dharma is a matter of life and death, as it were. It is a much more desperate, a much more existential sort of thing. So one has to be very much more definite; there is no question of 'as it were' or 'so to speak'; no, you have to give it to them very directly indeed. They want that, they appreciate that. It is not that they are incapable of appreciating finer distinctions. It is not that they are not intelligent; they are intelligent, even those who are illiterate or relatively illiterate. They are certainly capable of understanding the basic truths of the Dharma without too much difficulty. But they need to be given, they feel the need for, a very definite lead. so there is the point that, in India, Buddhism is such a frail plant still, even there are so many jungle growths springing up all around, so many weeds in the form of micchaditthis (not the micchaditthis that are actually in the West) that you have to be very clear and very definite and very firm as to what Buddhism is and what Buddhism requires, what Buddhism demands, what it means to be a Buddhist. Also, perhaps I don't know, this has just occurred to me when I am in India, when I am giving a lecture, I might perhaps have given a lecture in that particular place 23 years before, and the older people still remember that. I don't know whether I am ever going to come again. So I perhaps think, almost unconsciously, in terms of maximum effect in the course of an hour or an hour and a half; whereas, in the case of people in England at least, I have always got them relatively to hand, they are going to hear me on all sorts of occasions. There, perhaps, I have got to do things much more in concentrated bursts. If I knew that I was only going to be giving, say, two more lectures in England, for the next, say, 10 years, and I wouldn't be uttering a word in public again in England for another 10 years, I might be tempted to use a sledgehammer then. But that is not likely to be the case. I think it is for some such reasons. But, yes, I certainly do use a sledgehammer in India, especially when talking to the exUntouchable Buddhists, who are the people that we mainly are dealing with.

Dhammarati: There is a passage on p.15 of the text, a very short one, where Gampopa says: 'The stupid ... are unable to know for themselves what has been said to be good or evil.' If you look at the world outside, there are some comparatively deep and subtle thinkers who do not seem to see the necessity for a spiritual life, and on the other hand with maybe one or two exceptions there are no artistic or intellectual heavyweights in the Order, but you've got 250 odd people who can tell good from evil clearly enough to be practising the Dharma. I find it hard to understand how so many apparently intelligent people can be so stupid when it comes to such a vital issue, and how so many apparently stupid people can be so ... on such a vital issue! [Could you say something about this?]

S.: It is, of course, quite a big generalization, because yes, there are these apparently highly intelligent people who don't seem to realize the importance of the spiritual element, let us say, in human life, or who even explicitly reject it. But perhaps there are all sorts of quasi-historical explanations for that. Perhaps they identify that spiritual element with Christianity; perhaps historical Christianity isn't, quite understandably, acceptable to them; perhaps the Eastern religions, at least, as seen from a distance by them, seem quite irrelevant, seem quaint, exotic, weird, and so on. But I think also perhaps one has to consider the nature of that kind of intelligent person: that very often they seem to be what we would call alienated. Shortly I was going to say shortly after I came to England, but actually it happened even before that, even when I was in India and I was meeting various Tibetologists, as they called themselves, at least at that time I couldn't help noticing that many of these very intelligent, highly educated people certainly did not have their emotions under control. Very often they thought that they were motivated by reason, by rationality, but I could see quite clearly that they were influenced very deeply, very strongly, by emotional factors of which they were not fully conscious, and on account of which there were terrible jealousies between them, terrific competitiveness. And I found this when I came back to England and had a bit of contact with people at universities people who were teaching or doing research at universities. There seemed to be this terrible hiatus between their intelligence, [70] which was often highly developed, and their emotions, which seemed absolutely infantile. I think one reason why such people, though highly intelligent and in some cases incredibly intelligent, find it difficult to recognize any spiritual element in life or to see the need for that is just because their emotions are so alienated, or they themselves are so alienated from their emotions. I think this is a good part, perhaps, of the explanation. Also I think we must not underestimate the influence of the economic factor; especially in the case of people at universities, it is a career. They are not disinterestedly pursuing the truth. It is a job; it is a job that pays; it is a job that pays very well, in many cases. And usually it is the pay and the prospects, it is the career, that they are interested in. They are ambitious people who follow that particular path. Some of them have got a genuine interest in their subject, others not. So they might be, say, teaching philosophy or they might be teaching theology or even comparative religion; they might be teaching science, or whatever; but it is a job, and I think the fact that they are tied to their job, tied to their career they have got families and mortgages like everybody else keeps them in that groove, limits them, intellectually, even, in that way. Do you see what I am getting at? If you think, for instance, that among the most highly intelligent people in our modern world are scientists, nuclear scientists; so how are at least two-thirds of them engaged or occupied? We all know that, probably: they are engaged, directly or indirectly, in the production of nuclear weapons. I did read somewhere the exact figures, but anyway at least two-thirds of nuclear physicists are involved, directly or indirectly, in the production of nuclear weapons. And I believe, out of those, two-thirds are probably employed in the United States. Why is it that they do not direct their intelligence in other ways, perhaps in a spiritual direction? Well, the pay is too good. Do you see what I mean? The temptations are so great. Also there is a certain, perhaps, intellectual interest, intellectual stimulus, in what they are doing, which can become almost drug-like. On the other hand, one must also recognize that there are some people of this calibre who have some awareness of the need for a spiritual element in life, some awareness of spiritual values; people like David Bohm, for instance. So there are a few such people and one can only hope that there will be more of them.

Dhammarati: ... we were talking about, going so much against the historical and economic trend of the time, how do you think we can bridge that gap, how can we start to ?

S.: You just have to keep on pegging away until you become fashionable and take advantage of that without succumbing to the temptations of fashionableness.

: But would you not say, Bhante, that apart from people's careers..., they have a desire for family life, or are reluctant to give up family life?

S.: Yes, that also no doubt plays its part, but that also plays its part in the case of the not so intelligent I mean the not so intelligent in that particular way. I think that is something that plays its part with everybody in some degree.

: Is this ... attribute particularly emotionally integrated?

S.: Well, I think in the first place most of you haven't been exposed much to temptation of [being highly] paid. And, fortunately, the majority of you are not outstandingly intelligent (laughter). So, in your modest way, on your own comparatively lowly level, you are quite integrated! So the difference between you and them the sort of people that we have been talking about is that you may not have got very far, but at least you have got a certain distance on the right [71] path. They have gone quite a long way, but unfortunately entirely, or almost entirely, on the wrong path!

Dhammarati: So it's just merit that's got us human ..., do you think?

S.: I think one could put it like that, a modest endowment of merit, with a reasonable glimmering of intelligence; perhaps a touch of Insight, even, occasionally. But, yes, it does seem in a way strange, because you've got in the Order (it will be) about 250 or more people, and they have certainly seen things pretty clearly; and they have certainly, in most cases, made a reasonable adaptation of themselves to what they have seen, or at least they have got a particular idea of what they have to do in order to make that adaptation, or make it to a higher degree. It is true we don't have any outstanding talents or geniuses; there are some people with a bit of talent, but we haven't got anyone yet, even in a national class [not] to speak of international class whether as an artist or as a thinker or even as a social worker or anything of that sort. But these are early days, and I think it is noteworthy that the Movement as a whole is attracting more and more positive people, and in a sense perhaps more and more intelligent people; the more we have to offer, the more the people who come along will be of such a nature as to be able to take advantage of it. And every generation of Order Members is going to be standing as it were on the shoulders of the preceding generation, and being able to see very much further. The amount of Dharma knowledge that is now available in the Movement is very much greater than it was even five or six years ago; it is sort of having a snowball effect. Things are getting sorted out, things are getting clarified, and what has been sorted out, what has been clarified, is passed on to people who come along for the first time in a sense, almost as soon as they put their foot in the door; a lot is made clear, in a very inspiring way, on their first beginners' retreat in Battle. Whereas formerly you might have had to struggle for four or five years before getting all those things clear. Nowadays, if you are lucky, you can get them all made clear, at least theoretically, in the course of a week. So I think the quality and the calibre of the people involved in the Movement, even though at present there are not really any very brilliant individuals, is going to go on increasing all the time; and I think the time will come when the Movement does produce some very gifted people indeed. But they won't be gifted, they won't be brilliant, in the unbalanced, one-sided, alienated way that one does find in the outside world at present, and perhaps will still find

then.

Gerry: This is a question regarding male and female organs in the text, it's regarding homosexuality. (1) We are told that in the bardo at the time of choosing one's next birth, if you are sexually attracted to the female and repelled by the male of the copulating couple you will become a male, and that if you are attracted to the male and repelled by the female you will be born as a female. How does this square with homosexuality? It is said that 6 out of 10 men have homosexual tendencies; there could be a certain gender confusion. (Laughter.)

S.: I suppose one could look at it quite simply. The texts do not consider the possibility of homosexuality though there are various other things to be said here, which I will try to say in a minute but one might say it is a question of predominance, at least at the time of conception. You might feel the reincarnating entity, let us say might feel sexually attracted by both partners that 'it' sees, but there might be a slightly greater attraction to the one partner than to the other, in which case 'it' is reborn belonging to the opposite sex to that which 'it' was initially attracted by. Anyway, that is what happens at the time of conception; that is what you are as it were conceived as, that is what you [72] are born with. But what about later developments? What about your childhood experience? That is all going to have, conceivably, a modifying effect. And what about even later experiences? What about external conditions? Suppose, for instance, you find yourself in an all-male environment for many years: well, you might, at the time of your conception, have been greatly attracted by the female that you saw, and therefore have been reborn, let us say, with very heterosexual instincts; but, all right, supposing you are shut up with a lot of other men for years on end, isn't that going to modify you in some way? Do you see what I mean? So I think we have to bear all these considerations in mind. I must say that Indian Buddhist literature in fact, Indian literature generally does not seem to give adequate consideration to what we would regard as the question of homosexuality, doesn't even discuss it in those terms. Indian literature seems quite unaware of the phenomenon; which is perhaps interesting. It seems, in some ways, at least in its terminology, quite confused. The ancient Indians, including the Buddhists, seem, as far as one can make out from the literature, to have confused homosexuality, as we call it, with hermaphroditism, whereas of course the two things are quite distinct. And sometimes both, even, are in a strange way confused with a sort of eunuchoid state. So the texts do not always distinguish clearly between what we would call homosexuality and what we would call hermaphroditism, on the one hand, or between what we would call homosexuality and what we would call a eunuchoid state, on the other hand, either.

Gerry: Would that be from the point of view of practice or from the point of view of the circumstances that [ob]tained in India in that day?

S.: I think usually the consideration would be from the point of view of actual practices engaged in.

: Does what you said about the choice being made in the bardo imply that a homosexual [man] is more likely to be reborn as a woman?

S.: The general Buddhist view in this regard is that sex is determined by mental attitude, not so much by your directly sexual attitude but your overall, one might even say, emotional attitude. The traditional Buddhist view, which feminists nowadays would strongly disagree with, always has been that you are reborn as a woman if you are mentally preoccupied more

with material and bodily things, including sexuality; and, of course, from the standpoint of the Bardo Thodol, if your predominant sexual interest was towards the male sex. But Buddhist tradition, especially Indian Buddhist tradition, seems to see these things in a somewhat different way than we see them today.

Gerry: (2) Would you say that there was a relationship between the incidence of homosexuality in a given society and the height of that society's culture? I am thinking particularly of classical Greece and Renaissance Italy.

S.: Greek homosexuality is often referred to or spoken of, but it actually would seem that the Greeks were not homosexual; I think that is a popular delusion or myth. If the Greeks were anything, they seem to have been bisexual. Some forms of homosexuality, as we would call it, were in fact ridiculed by the Greeks ridiculed in their drama, for instance. The Greeks regarded it as quite disgraceful for one grown man to be attracted by another grown man; they didn't think in those terms at all. This is not our usual view of the Greeks, but this is in fact what the Greeks were really like. So the Greeks were not quite homosexual in the modern sense; otherwise they wouldn't have lasted for more than one generation, presumably! But it seems that the Greeks, as far as one can generalize or so far as one knows from the literature, tended to be, at least potentially, bisexual, and [73] very often their more romantic emotions tinged, no doubt, by sexuality were directed towards the younger members of their own sex; partly, possibly, because of the relative seclusion of women, at least in the higher ranks of society.

Gerry: So you would say from that that there didn't seem to be any real

S.: Again, you see, one has to be very careful looking at these things, because certain things may coexist, but one may not be the cause of the other. The Greeks had a highly developed culture yes, all right; the Greeks, let us say, were homosexual, subject to the correction I have made. But you cannot therefore assume that the one was the cause of the other. The Greeks, we must not forget, also practised infanticide, especially female infanticide; so what is the connection there? You could equally argue that those societies which practised infanticide would be more likely to have a higher culture. The Greeks also, we must not forget, practised slavery in the classical period though of a comparatively humane type; nonetheless it was an integral part of their civilization. So it is not easy to look at all these factors and decide whether one or another was an actual direct cause of something else, in this case the higher culture. If you take, for instance, Renaissance Italy yes, it is quite clear that you have got, perhaps, a relatively high incidence of homosexuality, but the majority of people were heterosexual, so why should you claim that the culture is a product of the homosexuals? Were the heterosexuals entirely not responsible were they completely uncultured? People like to point to Michelangelo and Leonardo and so on, but even [so] there is the whole question of the relation between their particular sexual type or temperament and the work they produced. Could you say that there was a direct causal relationship? It is difficult to say. On the other hand, what about all the other great artists who were of a very decidedly heterosexual temperament? What about Raphael quite notorious in that respect? What about Filippino Lippi? what a dreadful case he was! Do you see what I mean? One has to be very careful about overgeneralization. I am not, in a sense, saying yes or no in answer to the question, but I am rather encouraging people to think more critically, examine evidence more closely, and try not to come too hastily to any conclusions, especially where the field is very complex.

Chairman: A question now from Buddhadasa.

Buddhadasa: This question arose from a discussion concerning the best conditions needed for a human rebirth, and particularly to be born during the period of a Buddha. (1) How literally should we accept the doctrine that there are certain kalpas which will give rise only to one, two, three, four or five Buddhas, or to none at all? (2) What are the conditions required for the advent of a Buddha?

S.: Let's take the questions one by one. Buddhadasa (repeats (1).)

S.: We don't really know. I don't think we are in a position to say whether we should take it literally or not. But I think Lama Govinda makes a very interesting point in this connection, which we might consider. He finds the fact that the Buddhas are distributed as it were unevenly quite significant. It is not that in every kalpa, say every so many tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of years, you get a Buddha it's regular, clockworklike; it is not like that at all. It is very irregular. He seems to consider this significant. I don't remember exactly what he says. He considers it significant because, according to him, it [74] suggests that a sort of living principle is at work which, in a way, means a spiritual principle. It is not something that is built into the structure of the universe in a mechanical way. So at least he makes that point, and perhaps we can say that even though we can't tell whether to take this distribution of Buddhas literally or not, at least we can take it that an irregular distribution of Buddhas points to the operation of an actual living principle, not a mechanical one; it points, really, therefore, to the operation of a spiritual principle. I think Lama Govinda makes this point in an essay or... which he contributed to *Stepping Stones* years and years ago. It may well have been incorporated in *The Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*.

Prasannasiddhi: Couldn't we say that stopping at five is a sort of mechanical or artificial ?

S.: Well, if there is a finite number of Buddhas, that number has to stop somewhere, one might say. For instance, this particular kalpa is called the bhadra kalpa because an unusually large number of Buddhas appears. Well, the earliest sources mention five, but there are Mahayana sources that mention 1,000 which is a good round number; again, perhaps not to be taken literally. But 1,000 is considerably more than five, isn't it? Then the second part of the question?

Buddhadasa: What are the conditions required for the advent of a Buddha? (I think ... sense, assuming that)

S.: Of course, the main condition required is that there should have been a Bodhisattva preparing himself to take birth and become a Buddha. The traditional requirements are that there should be a part of the earth where ethical standards are reasonably high; but at the same time where there is no actual Insight, in Buddhist terms, where the Path to Nirvana is not known, where it has been overgrown for generations, and perhaps even the memory of such a path has vanished; but where nonetheless there is a good, positive ethical and cultural standard, so that the people of that society will be able to appreciate the truth when it is eventually made known to them by a Buddha.

Buddhadasa: A high degree of culture, would you say?

S.: There again we have to be rather careful with this word culture, because in the Buddha's day there were some aspects of culture which we would regard as essential that were apparently missing. It was an oral culture, it wasn't a literary culture; we mustn't forget that. There was not much in the way of fine arts, not in the relatively modern sense. But it was a cultured society; for instance, it was a very polite society, judging by the records. It was a society in which manners were very refined, personal relations were highly developed, people were very courteous in speaking to one another.

: Have you had any thoughts on the saying that only one Buddha can be born in the world in a given period?

S.: When you say 'in a given period', what do you mean?

: While the Dharma exists in the world, no other Buddhas can be born.

S.: This arises out of the very nature of a Buddha, in the sense of his historical role. I have gone into this in the Survey, haven't I? that the Buddha, in that sense, by definition, is one who discovers the Path to Nirvana at a time when it is not known. So, so long as that Path remains known, another Buddha, in that sense, by definition, cannot arise. Someone can follow the Path and gain [75] Nirvana, but to gain Nirvana in that way by following a Path already revealed by someone else is not to be a Buddha in the sense that it is defined in this connection.

: But what about those parts of the world where the Dharma is not known? The Dharma was known in India in the Buddha's time, but there were many other parts of the world where it was not known.

S.: In Indian literature, 'world' seems to be synonymous with what they called Jambudvīpa, which for them, for all practical purposes, meant India.

: So would it be possible, then [given that], say, Sakyamuni Buddha arose from a certain culture, with its limitations to have one Buddha in India, another one in China, say, and another one in the Polynesian islands, or something like that?

S.: I must say, looking at it in a nontraditional way, it would seem, on the face of it, not impossible that there should be different Buddhas in different parts of the world in that way. But then the fact remains that, as far as we know, Buddhas did not arise. So perhaps they didn't arise because they couldn't arise.

: Which way should we then regard the expectation of the Buddha Maitreya ... present Buddha?

S.: I think Indian texts would take it for granted that Maitreya would appear in Jambudvīpa. But we may regard Jambudvīpa as being the whole of this earth. As far as I remember, the only specific information we are given about him certainly in the earliest scriptures is that he will have a much larger following than Sakyamuni Buddha had. I think this is one reason why Rajneesh thinks he is Maitreya Buddha! But I think questions like this are sure to arise as a result of what one might call universalization of our outlook, because all the great cultures, all the great civilizations, even religions, of antiquity, developed in relative isolation from one

another. Confucius knew nothing of India. The Buddha, apparently, knew nothing of China not that we have any record of that nor anything of ancient Greece. Perhaps he had vaguely heard of the Yavanas(?) or the Yonakas(?), but the Buddha had certainly not heard, let us say, of the Teutonic tribes, however active they might have been at that time. So I think, by virtue of that kind of situation, there is automatically a certain at least geographical limitation imposed on the vision of all those ancient sages, and that cannot but be reflected in some way in their teachings; but not in any essential way. In principle, their teachings nonetheless are always universal. When they said 'India', they meant 'the world'. India, for them, was the world, because it was all that they knew. Or China was the world, because it was all that they knew. For us, the world is the world! But if we were to discover people living on Venus, we would have to expand our notion of the world. How are we going with the questions?

Chairman: We've got two more to come. There is another question from ...

Prasannasiddhi: The question arises from the central paragraph on p.17. It arose from a confusion in the study group, especially in the second half of the paragraph. We were confused about where good deeds were accrued by beings in the lower three realms, and where they are to manifest, especially in the case of the animal realm, considering what was said in the beginning of that paragraph.

[76]

S.: Yes, this is not really clear even there is an ambiguous paragraph here, at least as translated. 'Therefore a human body can only be acquired by one who, though he is born in the three lower forms of existence, has very little evil and possesses an accumulation of merits accruing from good deeds that are to be experienced in some other form of life.' The ambiguity consists in the fact that it is not clear whether the 'accumulation of merits accruing from good deeds' refers to merit accruing from good deeds performed in previous lives, before that particular birth in hell. So there is an ambiguity in the text. Even supposing one accepts that the meritorious deeds are performed in the hell state itself, or in the animal state itself, that would seem to suggest that Gampopa envisages, or his source envisages, a sort of upward movement through these realms, which are regarded as being one on top of the other, as it were, in an almost evolutionary way; which might be incompatible with certain other aspects of traditional Buddhist thought. But if that was accepted that there was this as it were upward evolutionary movement one would have to accept that at least some of the beings in those states were capable of meritorious actions which will cause them to be reborn on the next highest level at least;

Tape 7, Side 1

In other words, that it would be possible for the being in hell to perform some meritorious deeds so that he is reborn as a preta, and for the preta to perform some meritorious deeds so he is reborn as an animal, and the animal to perform some meritorious deeds so that he is reborn as a human being; just as a human can perform some meritorious deeds and be reborn as a deva.

Prasannasiddhi: Isn't there a slight contradiction in the first bit, where he says that beings in those three realms, due to ignorance, perform highly evil deeds?

S.: Yes, if you take this ambiguous sentence in one of those senses, there would be an

inconsistency there.

Prasannasiddhi: The second part of the question is: It appears from certain experiments carried out on chimpanzees and gorillas that they can perform intelligent acts say, the use of sign language. Do you consider it possible for such animals to accrue sufficient good merit to be born in a human realm, (a) by their own efforts or (b) through the influence of human interaction?

S.: In the case of the chimpanzees in question, they have been influenced by human beings, by their keepers. They have been taught, they have been trained. But one might say, well, it is not perhaps impossible that a chimpanzee of that sort could not be reborn as a human being. One would not like to affirm it positively, but it seems reasonable that it might be. But it is a chimpanzee, and a chimpanzee is one of the most highly developed of the primates; and one certainly could not apply that, perhaps, to each and every form of animal life, or even to each and every chimpanzee. Some chimpanzees may be luckier than others, let us say. It is not every chimpanzee that is caught young or born in captivity and comes in contact with some human being who is interested in performing experiments with chimpanzees and takes the trouble to teach it sign language and so on. It is a quite exceptional chimpanzee. So it would be a quite exceptional chimpanzee who was reborn as a human being; or perhaps it is a quite exceptional human being who is reborn as a Brahma or who gains Enlightenment.

Prasannasiddhi: Is there anything to suggest that if the animal can perform such deeds through the influence of human interaction there is a possibility in some circumstances that it might be able to perform, say, intelligent deeds in its own natural environment?

[77]

S.: I think, if I am not mistaken, that some animals, especially primates, have been observed performing apparently intelligent acts of their own accord in a wild state. It is known, I think, that I am not sure who they are some primates, possibly including the chimpanzees do make use of sticks or twigs for certain purposes as though they were tools.

Prasannasiddhi: So, given that situation, there is the possibility of an animal connection(?)

S.: But if one accepts the general evolutionary principle, in a way it is what one would expect that there would be this upward movement throughout the whole of existence, and that presumably there would be the possibility of one species, or at least an individual of one species, evolving by way of rebirth into an individual of another species. In a way, it is what one would expect.

Prasannasiddhi: How does that tie in with your ... seminar notes on 'once a human being, always a human being'?

S.: 'Once a human being'? That doesn't necessarily follow. It is only the one who is a Stream Entrant that doesn't regress; from a Buddhist point of view, it is possible. Buddhist literature is in a sense not quite clear on this point. Sometimes it speaks as though, say, a human being could not be reborn as an animal, and sometimes it definitely states or seems to state that a human being could be reborn as an animal. Again, perhaps we have to sort out what we are to take literally and what we are not to take literally. But the Buddhist scriptures themselves do not seem, on the surface, to be entirely clear or entirely consistent in this respect.

Prasannasiddhi: The third question is: Does the human realm pertain exclusively to having a human body? Does this apply universally to the existence of other life forms?

S.: If one speaks of 'realm', one speaks in terms of body. If one speaks of someone as belonging to the human realm, the human loka, one means he or she has a human body. If one speaks of someone belonging mentally to the human realm, that in a sense only confuses the issue. It is possible for an animal let us say, for the sake of argument to develop a human mental attitude; but you can only speak of that animal as belonging to the human world in a metaphorical sense, because by virtue of his animal body he belongs to the animal 'world'; just as we continue to belong to the human 'world', even though perhaps in meditation we ascend to a devaloka, but we don't live there.

Chairman: The last question is Dharmadhara's question on initiation.

Dharmadhara: To pass on initiations, does a teacher need to be initiated into giving initiations, or does just the practice constitute an empowerment?

S.: It varies. It depends whether one is speaking about the Vajrayana in a very technical sense, as a tradition, or whether one is just speaking of spiritual life itself. In the Vajrayana technically, there is what they call a guru initiation, which is the initiation which enables you to transmit a particular teaching to disciples of your own. But, looking at the question more broadly, or from a more spiritual point of view, if you know something you can transmit what you know; you don't need as it were a separate, in a sense, almost authorization or enabling for you to transmit what you know. The fact that you know it means that you can transmit it. So the Vajrayana principle, in a way, should not be understood in such a way as to invalidate that particular principle. Otherwise it is like having a light; in order to make that light illumine something you need another, [78] second light which is ridiculous, because light by its very nature is illuminating. Similarly with knowledge.

Dhammarati: In the private ordination, for instance, when somebody asks you for a practice and you give them a mantra, does something different happen in that context, for instance, from that person learning the same practice and the same mantra at a Centre? Is there a qualitative difference ?

S.: It depends what one means by different. The Tibetan tradition, I think, the Vajrayana tradition, would be that something very special happens. I would say I am not inclined to go along with that, because I think that is attaching too much importance to the specific setup, in a purely external sense. I would say that the basic question is the question of communication between two minds. Communication can certainly be of different degrees and levels of intensity. It can even be of different kinds. It can be, say, mundane as distinct from transcendental. But the kind or the quality of the communication is not necessarily, or not inevitably, associated with the particular external, formal, as it were ceremonial, setup. Do you see what I mean?

Dhammarati: The fact that you are explaining, as it were, and the other person, because of the external situation, is very concentrated, perhaps would give the communication a particular importance.

S.: Oh yes, indeed. It must do. So one might even say that any dharmic-type communication,

especially as between one who knows somewhat more and one who knows somewhat less, is of, so to speak, an initiatic nature to the extent that it is genuine communication at all. And that leaving aside the distinction of mundane and transcendental will really differ only in degree from as it were a formal initiation. So you might get an initiation when you least expect it! On the other hand, I have known people in a sense not receive initiations when they have expected [to], because perhaps they were expecting too much, or they had prepared themselves in the wrong way. One has seen a lot of this in the East: when people are not genuinely open or receptive, they are just trying to grab something, which is self-defeating. So I think there shouldn't no doubt a lot happens at the time of a let's say formal initiation, very often but one mustn't associate with that a sort of false mystique. It is only an exemplification in a particular situation of what is in fact a universal principle, something that is happening all the time. So one might say that, yes, maybe the initiation that you get at the time of your private ordination is of special importance, and marks a definite turning point; but also one can say that you are getting initiations all the time, within the Movement, from your spiritual friends. Perhaps you are giving them, sometimes. You may not think in those terms, but that might be, in effect, in principle, actually what is happening. I think it is very important to distinguish the principle involved from its specific manifestations or exemplifications, and not as it were seek to limit the principle to particular situations. Is that it?

Chairman: Yes.

Voices: Thank you, Bhante.

[79]

Tape 8, Side 1

Chairman: Before we start, I would just like to say that most of the groups found difficulty in coming up with questions, not just on this chapter but ... also.

Sangharakshita: So how many have we tonight?

Chairman: We have 11 questions tonight.

S.: That's enough!

Chairman: The first question raises a problem from last night, and it is from Barry.

Barry: You mentioned last night that, for the exUntouchable Buddhists in India whom you lectured to, the Dharma is a matter of life or death. Could you say something about why this is so, and how we can introduce this kind of urgency into our practice of the Dharma in the West?

S.: I think one has to know something first of all about the actual plight of the Untouchables, in the sense of their position in Indian society in Hindu society: their position at the very bottom of the social scale. I can't really go into detail on this occasion, but there is sufficient literature available from India, from the FWBO in India, bearing on this topic. There are, for instance, the writings of Dr Ambedkar, among others, which are available, which one can purchase, in fact, and which will give one a very good idea of the sort of disabilities that the

exUntouchables laboured under and still labour under, to a very great extent. One can also consult, for instance, the biographies not only of Ambedkar himself but of a very important predecessor of his called Mahatma Jhyotiba Pullai(?), who lived mainly towards the end of the last century, and was a great social reformer, and was an exUntouchable or one must say, in those days, an Untouchable of a slightly different community from Ambedkar. Pullai was a Mali(?), Ambedkar was a Mahar not that that probably means very much to you at this stage, but they are both pretty low down in the social scale. In India, the caste system is quite all-pervasive. It is practically impossible to get away from it. It is practically impossible, unless you go to a very big city and, socially speaking, get lost there, not to be regarded by other people as a member of a particular caste and treated accordingly. If you have read *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus*, you will remember the difficulties I had, in my early wandering days in south India, not allowing myself to be classified in this way, because this was so much the way that people thought; they could not imagine that you did not have a caste. They all thought you must have a caste, whether a high one or a low one. So one must realize, first of all, that this was the sort of system that the exUntouchables were caught up in and are still caught up in, and also realize that in that system they have a very, very low position, one of great difficulty. So it was only natural that they should want to escape from what Ambedkar called the hell of Untouchability; it really is a hell. The position of the blacks in South Africa, say, is far, far better than that of exUntouchables in India, even today, in many areas. At least blacks in South Africa are allowed into white people's homes as servants; white people don't object to touching them. But there is no question of a caste Hindu, who is observing the caste Hindu rules as most of them do allowing an Untouchable into his house or allowing him to cook in his house or touching him or anything of that sort. They are quite literally, for many caste Hindus, untouchable. Even though the practice of untouchability is against the law [80] now, the law remains a dead letter. So the position of the exUntouchables is very difficult indeed. So they wanted to escape from this hell; so Ambedkar came to the conclusion, eventually, that the best way in a way, the only way for them to do this was through Buddhism, which means that he rejected any purely secular solution. He rejected, for instance, the Marxist solution. He believed that the religious instinct is absolutely ineradicable in man, so that if his followers, the exUntouchables, gave up Hinduism, as he felt they had to do if they were going to escape from the caste system and untouchability, they would have to adopt some other religion; and, in the end, he concluded that Buddhism was the religion that they should accept, because Buddhism, among other things, did not countenance the caste system. So those exUntouchables who have accepted Buddhism see in Buddhism their only hope for social salvation, economic salvation, cultural salvation not to speak of religious or spiritual salvation. They see it as the answer, in a way, to all their problems, those who have embraced it, those who have Gone for Refuge; and they feel that there is no other hope for them. There is no hope for them apart from Buddhism of escaping from the hell of Untouchability. One might inquire why conversion to Buddhism should have this sort of effect why they should see it in those terms. I wondered this myself years and years ago, when I was on tour among them and giving lectures to them. I asked quite a number of them in different parts of western India: 'What difference does it make to you now that you have become Buddhists?' because, for a long time, to all outward appearances, there was no change in their situation at all; they were just as poor, just as badly treated, just as downtrodden. But wherever I went I got the same answer: they all said, 'Now we have become Buddhists, we feel free.' In other words, they felt free within their own minds, whatever their outward condition might have been; the fact that they had given up Hinduism, the fact that they considered themselves Buddhist, gave them a sense of freedom which made it possible for them to transcend or to overcome all their other difficulties, all their other

limitations. And, of course, over the last few decades, one might say it is nearly three decades now so many of them have improved their situation in so many ways, with the help largely of the inspiration provided by their faith in Buddhism. Not that they are perfect Buddhists yet by any means; the majority of them, one might say, still don't really understand what Buddhism is all about; but at least they have got the feeling that they are Buddhists, they are not Hindu any more, they are not Untouchables, that they are human beings and that they insist on being treated as such. So we can see that Buddhism means a very great deal to [them]. It is not just an intellectual interest, as it often is with people in the West. It is not just a question of engaging in a bit of oriental therapy in the form of meditation, just to slightly alleviate your rather world-weary situation, and add a little spice to life; it is nothing like that at all. It has altogether a different significance. How we are to introduce that sort of urgency into our lives is difficult to say, because how can you make your life urgent when it isn't? Perhaps people have to ponder on other aspects of their lives; because if the exUntouchables are in a very parlous state still, many of them, socially and economically and culturally, people in the West are often in a very parlous state psychologically and spiritually, or even culturally, in certain respects. And if we don't ourselves, perhaps, suffer very much in these ways, we can at least look around and see that there are many people in our society, in the West, who do suffer very seriously, very severely; and even if our position, perhaps, psychologically and in other ways, isn't desperate, theirs is. So, inasmuch as we are involved in that situation, in a way, with them, and if their situation is urgent, well, in a sense ours is. We should use that to lend urgency to our own practice and propagation of the Dharma. I see things in the newspapers, like so many thousand young people that is to say, as far as I remember, under 21 committing suicide over a certain period; [81] which seems dreadful which is dreadful. You see statistics about alcoholism. What is it, in an affluent society, that drives people to alcoholism? There must be something terribly wrong. With all the facilities that we have, such as many people in India would give their eyes for, we still find life so little worth living, apparently, that we are driven to alcoholism; and this is a growing problem.

Murray: It just occurred to me, the point about the Insight into impermanence you could ... the same sense of urgency.

S.: Oh, yes, indeed. If you are thinking in terms of Insight, well, yes: any human situation is one of incredible urgency, because you may die the very next minute. But I was taking it that the question was not asked on that level, but on as it were an ordinary, everyday plane. But, yes, you might die tonight before you got a chance of gaining Stream Entry, so in principle the situation is equally urgent, whether for an Untouchable in India or for someone living in the midst of the affluent society in the West: existentially speaking, it is no more urgent in the one case than in the other. But that sort of urgency is very difficult for people to see; but that is what they have to see, sooner or later, whether in the East or in the West.

Dhammarati: Could you say something about why Ambedkar rejected Marxism and took up Buddhism to bring about change?

S.: I have gone into this at some length in my lecture on 'Dr Ambedkar's Dhamma Revolution', which is printed in the Dhammamegha series and is available in England. But the main reason was that he didn't agree with Marxist violence. He wasn't happy that Marxism did not accept the principle of nonviolence. That was the principal reason.

Dhammarati: Was that on ethical grounds or pragmatic grounds?

S.: I would say that it was predominantly on ethical grounds. He believed in nonviolence as an ethical principle, not just as a matter of expediency.

Pavel: There are also Muslims in India: how were they [seen] by Dr Ambedkar? Did he reject Islam?

S.: Ambedkar, though a deeply religious man even when he was a Hindu, doesn't seem to have had any faith in God doesn't seem to have believed in God, and seems to have had a quite rational attitude towards religion. So I think it was out of the question for him to adopt, or ask his followers to adopt, any form of theism. Also, he was quite a patriotic Indian, and though he was full of resentment against the caste Hindus for what they had done and were doing to the exUntouchables, he didn't want to do any damage to India. He felt that, if he added to the number of Muslims in India, quite apart from the religious reasons for not accepting Islam and don't forget that there were, or are, some 80 millions of exUntouchables in India that could create a serious communal problem. So for such reasons he did not decide in favour of Islam. As regards relations between Muslims and exUntouchables, [82] whether Hindu or Buddhist, in India. they are quite friendly, strange to say, in a way. Similarly with relations between Christians and Buddhists; they often live in the same localities, but they are all minorities, you see, so they tend to band together in self-defence, one might say, against, almost, the Hindus or out of fear of the Hindus. Not only that, but exUntouchables, even as Hindus, did not observe all sorts of, say, dietetic restrictions that caste Hindus observed. They could mix socially, therefore, with Muslims and Christians quite easily. In many cases, the Christians and Muslims were originally converts from the ranks of the exUntouchables themselves. So one often finds in India that the exUntouchables, whether Hindus or Buddhists, keep up quite amicable social relations with Muslims and Christians. The situation is a little different there from what it is, perhaps, in England. There is no question of theology involved, no question of religion; it is all just on the social level; but even though it is limited in that way, still, social contact is social contact, and it all makes for a sort of more neighbourly feeling. ExUntouchable Buddhists will be invited, say, to Muslim weddings, and Muslims will be invited to exUntouchable Buddhist weddings; this is a quite common sort of thing if you happen to know those people, they happen to be friends of yours; they will come to your social functions. Muslims have even been known to turn up for Buddha Jayantis when they have been invited not to take part in the religious ceremonies, but just out of neighbourly feeling. This is not a bad thing, especially when you consider what Muslims are like in some parts of the world.

Prasannasiddhi: Is the exUntouchables' sense of freedom gained just because they have changed religion, or is it gained from something within Buddhism that goes deep enough to let them see that they are human beings?

S.: It arises partly out of the fact that they have given up Hinduism, but also out of the fact that they adopted Buddhism and that Buddhism assures them that they are human. The caste Hindus didn't even really treat them as human beings, but Buddhism says quite emphatically that a human being is a human being, and inasmuch as you are all human beings there is no fundamental difference between an Untouchable and a brahmin. So, in this way, Buddhism, by assuring them that they were human beings, gave them a sense of self-respect which then became the basis for advance on so many different fronts.

Gerry: Has conversion to Buddhism from Hinduism reached into of the other castes as yet,

and do you think that is necessary?

S.: Ambedkar, as I think I mentioned, came from the Mahar community, and his followers were mainly drawn from that community, and those who became converted to Buddhism were mainly from that community. But the conversion movement has had repercussions in other Untouchable or low-caste communities, too, though to a quite limited extent. Such is the nature of the caste system, so divisive is it, that although one would have thought that all the exUntouchable communities would make common cause and work together, that is by no means the case. There are quite a lot of differences, a lot of rivalries, between them. We have even had difficulty ourselves in Poona and the other places where we operate, bringing in people interested in Buddhism from other communities, even from other exUntouchable communities. I did have a letter from one of the Indian Order Members recently or it might have been Lokamitra, but someone there informing me that there was a very promising young new Mitra who actually was from a different community, who was from the cobbler(?) community, which is again quite low it is an Untouchable community and this was regarded as quite an achievement, that they had succeeded in attracting someone from a different exUntouchable community. But I believe very strongly that, unless we succeed in attracting in India people of all communities, our work there has not been fully successful. The conversion movement has not been a success, I feel, if it is limited just to one particular caste or group of castes. One has to draw on people from all castes and all communities. This is one reason why, in India, I am strongly in favour of inter-caste marriages: because they do help break down the caste system. It is even why I was not wholly not in favour of Lokamitra getting married, because at least he married someone from an exUntouchable community, and that quite impressed many people there. It is as though Lokamitra demonstrated his sincerity, or demonstrated his commitment to the exUntouchables. Admittedly, it was in a sense in a sort of worldly way, but nonetheless it did have certain spiritual implications, or at least religious implications. I did hear, in fact, that [83] some of the Dalit Panthers I don't know if you know who Dalit Panthers are: they are the exUntouchable equivalent of the Black Panthers. They are sympathetic to Buddhism, but they are not completely happy about it because they tend to think that maybe nonviolent methods will not succeed with these caste Hindus and maybe you will have to resort to violence in the end. So they have reservations about Buddhism because Buddhism adopts a purely nonviolent approach. But some of them some of the leaders, even of the Dalit Panthers in Bombay and Poona, were very impressed, I was told, by the fact that Lokamitra actually married an exUntouchable girl, and were very pleased and attended the wedding and so on. So there are those sort of considerations touching our work in India. Sometimes, strange as it may seem to those of us who live and work in England or even in New Zealand, come to that; even in Finland actually in India marriage, the right sort of marriage, can be a way of propagating the Dharma! Not that I am encouraging it! I certainly don't condemn it, either.

Lalitaratna: You were saying yesterday, Bhante, that there are some very rough customers trying to get into Buddhist gatherings. Have there been any cases of the exUntouchables acting violently?

S.: Well, there haven't, because they are in a minority, and if you are in a minority it is rather dangerous to try to act violently, because the majority may retaliate. You see, the system was, in Maharashtra, which is the area we are mainly concerned with, that the exUntouchables were village servants, not to say serfs or even slaves. You would have a village, let's say for the sake of argument of about, say, 1,000 people that is to say, 1,000 caste Hindus; so they

would be mainly landowners, peasants, petty shopkeepers, that kind of thing. And then, attached to that village of caste Hindus, there would be a village, if you can call it that, just a few yards away, maybe a few hundred yards away, of Untouchables; and they would do all the dirty work, the dirtiest work, of the village. They would sweep the latrines; they would clear away the bodies of dead animals; they had certain other functions, too, but nearly all of a very dirty nature; sometimes the functions were connected with childbirth the clearing up of the mess and things like that. If there was any mess to be cleared up of any sort, you called on an exUntouchable. Not only did you call on him, you had the right to call on him. He could not refuse. He had to drop whatever he was doing and do what you told him to do. So, in return for their services, they were allowed to live on land belonging to the village. They didn't own that land, so they couldn't cultivate it, except perhaps just a few patches round about. They could be turned out at any moment. And, in return for their services, they were also given castoff clothing and leavings of food, and in the old days they were not allowed to eat certain foods, or they were not allowed to use proper cooking vessels. They were not allowed to wear new clothes, or anything of that sort. They had to use only castoff clothing. This is all within living memory. Some of our Friends and some of our Order Members, even, remember living in the villages under this sort of system when they were children. They have actually had this experience. Also, in the relatively old days, an Untouchable was not allowed out at certain times of the day when his shadow was long and liable to fall over people. He had to carry a pot around his neck to spit into, because he mustn't spit into the road in case someone stepped on it; and, of course, there is a lot of spitting in India. All sorts of things like that. Of course, not allowed into the caste Hindu temples; they had their own little temples if they had anything at all, where only they went. That is the way that they lived. So they were in the minority, and of course they didn't have any money, they didn't have any education, no one to speak for them. So, however badly they are treated, what is their position? How can they rebel violently? They are in a minority; the others are in a majority of 10 to 1; the others have [84] got money, they have got influence, they have got power, they have got weapons; what can these poor people do? Or what could they do? In the course of time, many of them moved into the big cities; especially, say, in Maharashtra many of them moved into Bombay and got work in the mills, and work even in the lower levels of government service. Of course, now many of them have risen and occupy positions of some responsibility, but they are still in a minority in their own community, and are still very often looked down upon by the very people with whom they work in government offices, if those people are caste Hindus. Sometimes they are very uncooperative and very obstructive. They resent the fact that the Untouchables have risen so far. Many caste Hindus, even now, believe that the Untouchables have no right to the 'privileges', as they call them, that they have now; they have no right, really, to education or improved housing, or better treatment. They believe that they should still be treated as Untouchables. They resent what the government has done for them. So there is no question, usually, of the exUntouchable minority resorting to violence. That is usually out of the question, for very obvious reasons. It is in very few places that they are collected together in any great numbers; almost everywhere they are in the minority. Not like the Muslims, who very often congregate in certain towns or certain villages and, at least in those places, are in a majority. Anyway, you can read up about these things, you will find quite a bit of literature at Padmaloka. Books on the subject are quite easily available now.

Chairman: OK, so we move on to the second question, which is from Bram.

Bram: Yesterday you mentioned the desirability of inviting Indian Order Members to the Tuscany retreats. You also said that, in such a case, the West would have to get the required

funds together.

S.: At least for the time being; at least for the next few years, I imagine.

Bram: Do you think it a good idea to set up a fund especially for this purpose? If so, should we start it as soon as possible or is the idea a bit premature?

S.: I think it would be a good idea. It is difficult to say whether it is premature. I think you would probably need to consult with Vessantara or somebody else in Aid for India, just so that there were not too many appeals for activities in India being made at the same time, and one possibly getting in the way of the other. But, yes, it would be a good thing to do, I am sure. Obviously it is something that we can do only among ourselves, or only among Buddhists in the West, because we could not very easily ask the sort of people that we ask for help for our broader Aid for India projects to help in this particular way.

Prasannasiddhi: Would it be possible to perhaps educate some of these exUntouchables maybe bring over quite a few, help them ?

S.: It might be possible, but I think that there would be difficulties. One has to realize that many of our Indian Friends are very much embedded in their families and their particular social system, and there would be considerable difficulties of acculturation in the West. I think probably, at least for the time being, it would be better if older, more mature, people were to come across, especially people knowing English well, or some other European language well, who could withstand whatever cultural shock there might be. But later on, who knows what might be possible? But I think Indians coming over, especially younger ones, would need a lot of looking after, because they are used to living in the midst of a lot of people, [85] having people all around them, and very friendly people with whom they are in constant contact and with whom there is constant interchange; and I think they could find life in England, at least I don't know about other parts of the West a bit emotionally cold; quite apart from the actual coldness of the weather! I can imagine some of our poor little Indian Friends shivering, not only literally but metaphorically too! So they would need to be looked after. Even sometimes people from other parts of the Western world, I think, find England a bit cold!

Chairman: The next question is from Dhammarati.

Dhammarati: This kind of ... from Gampopa and his border tribes. In the book *Up from Eden*, Ken Wilber suggests, as I understand it, that human beings collectively have gone through definite stages in the evolution of consciousness, coming from the magical level of consciousness, as he calls it, through the analytical to the rational egocentric consciousness that is our cultural norm. The way he suggests that this happens is that a few individuals break through to a new level of consciousness and manage to communicate that to other people, and then gradually it becomes established in religion and art and so on, and finally becomes as it were the cultural level. Wilber suggests that a child brought up in a culture anthropologically ... at the magical stage would more or less passively reach that level of consciousness, but a child brought up in Western culture would, again more or less passively, reach the level of consciousness that has in fact taken thousands of years of cultural evolution to reach. In the 'Higher Evolution' lectures you in very black and white terms talk about two ways of consciousness: you talk about the lower evolution where collectively consciousness

reached a certain level and then the higher evolution where individually we have to develop our own self-consciousness. Is culture a third factor in the evolution of consciousness? Is it possible to establish a certain level of consciousness in a culture that people born into that culture more or less passively reach?

S.: I am not quite sure how culture comes into it. But I think there is no doubt that whoever is born into a particular group inherits, so to speak, the level of consciousness in or not in association with a particular kind of culture which is represented by that particular group. Of course, some people don't quite manage it; others might go a little beyond it. But I think, broadly speaking, yes, you do inherit the consciousness and, if you like, the culture of the particular group into which you are born. We can see changes taking place even before our very eyes. I can see changes taking place; because youngsters who are going to school, say, now, in England, have clearly been born into a group and therefore a kind of consciousness, in a way, that I was not born into. Look, for instance to take a simple example at all the electronic gadgets: little children going off to school with pocket calculators and things. These things represent, to a slight extent, an actual modification of the group consciousness, a modification which has taken place in the course, at least, of my lifetime; and there have been other similar associated modifications too. Perhaps our consciousness our group consciousness, if you like has been modified by TV, by increased possibilities of travel air transport and all that sort of thing. Perhaps, even, our group consciousness has been modified all over the world by the threat, the possibility, of nuclear disaster.

Dhammarati: But, as I understand it, the main point that he makes is that ... culture is the ... [86] self-consciousness, and that the cultural... are a rational culture he argues is actually more self-conscious than the sort of base level of our culture ... working in magical modes and I suppose I wondered first of all is that true? and if it is true can you finally in a culture get a certain level of self-consciousness that people would be brought up to? Is there a ... suggested again by Gampopa's idea of the border tribes?

S.: I think one can say that there are different degrees, or different levels, in the evolutionary development of self-consciousness, and that no doubt if one looks back over history one can perhaps say that different groups represented different degrees or different levels of self-consciousness. Therefore, to that extent, one can agree with Wilber. Exactly where magical consciousness comes in, and in what sense there is a magical consciousness to what extent or in what way that magical consciousness is a form of self-consciousness that perhaps would need to be gone into in greater detail. But the principle, I think, holds good.

Dhammarati: Does that ...ation ... Buddhists ... see us gradually, as individuals, bringing about a certain level of consciousness, communicating and gradually setting that as the cultural level?

S.: A few minutes ago we were talking about India, and when I went to India on my last visit, possibly even on my visits before that, when the Movement there was much less developed than it is now in some ways I had quite a strange experience. I was going from the FWBO in England, say, to the FWBO in India; and don't forget, formerly I was very familiar with India, having lived there for quite a long time. But it was quite remarkable, in a way, though perhaps one should think not surprising, that the atmosphere, or if you like the level, or at least type, of consciousness in the FWBO in India was exactly the same as the level or at least the type of consciousness that one encountered in the FWBO in England. Do you see what I mean?

Despite the vast cultural differences and everything, one felt whether one was just talking with Order Members or whether one was on retreat in just the same kind of atmosphere, the same kind of environment; or, one might say, on the same level of consciousness, or at least in the midst of the same kind of consciousness. But I think one finds that, as it were, in all groups, wherever people meet together they all have their own as it were characteristic level or type of consciousness, and anybody drawn into that particular group will tend to either rise or fall to that level.

Dhammarati: So that the Higher Evolution ... when you talk about the collective lower evolution and individual higher evolution you don't think culture comes somewhere between the two?

S.: Well, culture comes in all along the line. There is no human society, however primitive, which does not have some culture. I think, when I was referring to culture in that context, I was probably thinking of higher culture: culture as including, for instance, the fine arts, not culture in the broader sense. But I think very often we don't realize the extent to which we depend on the group into which we have been born or to which we belong. For instance, where does our language come from? It comes from the group into which we have been born. We couldn't possibly have invented or constructed that language by ourselves, any more than we could have excogitated the Platonic philosophy or the Buddha's Dharma for ourselves. So we owe a lot to the group into which we are born, and we share, we inherit to a great extent, their consciousness, even though we do succeed in some cases in going beyond it. So if you have, say, a spiritual community taking the process a stage farther if someone is introduced into that spiritual community he will be in a sense, in a manner of speaking, forced to evolve, if he is not already up to that level. If he [87] can't do that, if he finds it unpleasant or difficult, he will just withdraw, he will drop out.

Dhammarati: So you see the WBO as having such a culture ... forced to evolve?

S.: Yes. In a sense, being born into or admitted into a particular culture as representing a particular state or type of consciousness forces you to evolve, you could say. You can either happily accept the pressure, accept the challenge, or react against it, resist it and eventually perhaps drop out, even if you don't actually oppose it.

Tape 8, Side 2

Chairman: The next question is from Mark.

Mark: Last night you mentioned David Bohm as a rare exception to the type of the modern alienated intellectual or scientist. Now Bohm is a physicist whose work seems to have led him to a world view which in some respects seems to resemble that of traditional Buddhism, and there have been a number of popular books in recent years, exploring the apparent similarities between modern physics and Eastern religions in general. To what extent do you think that the world view arrived at by modern physics is similar to the Buddhist world view? Have you had any further thoughts on this area since your lecture to the Wrekin Trust?

S.: This is something into which one can't really go in detail, but broadly speaking I regard any alleged parallels between the world view revealed by modern physics and the traditional world view of Buddhism with a considerable amount of suspicion. I think we should not

jump to the conclusion that they are necessarily talking about the same things, just because to some extent it would appear they are using similar language. But I would not like to say more than that, because I feel I need myself to look into it to a much greater extent than I have done. Nonetheless, having said that, I must say that having met David Bohm I was quite well impressed by him as a person. I did feel that he was a very sincere person with a definite, I won't even say spiritual potential, but some measure of spiritual awareness and sensitivity. To what extent that was due to his immersion in physics I wouldn't like to say; perhaps it had nothing to do with physics. But it was definitely there. I don't know whether you have seen yet my Travel Letters, but there is a description of him, or at least I give my impressions of him there. They were certainly quite favourable. I certainly thought that, in terms of individuality, he was probably the most outstanding person there that I met. He has had some contact with Krishnamurti; I wasn't very happy to hear about that. I thought that perhaps Krishnamurti might confuse more than clarify things. I find Krishnamurti confusing rather than clarifying. But David Bohm was quite keen that I should meet Krishnamurti and perhaps have a dialogue with him, but I did not personally feel that that was a very good idea. My impression has always been, reading some of Krishnamurti's dialogues, that he is not actually a very open-minded man; he tends to browbeat people quite a lot. He doesn't really listen to what other people say, very often. He has very definitely got his own line, which he puts across very forcibly indeed which is fair enough, but to engage in dialogue you need a rather different approach.

Chairman: The next question is from Mike Perkin.

Mike: This question arose from that section of chapter II where Gampopa talks about confidence.

[88]

S.: Yes, by the way, 'confidence' is Guenther's rendering of what we usually render as 'faith' or *sraddha*, in case anybody missed that.

Mike: In *Peace Is a Fire*, you say 'Faith is innate, doubt is acquired.' Thinking about aspects of *sraddha* which involve faith in our own ability to gain Insight or Enlightenment, could you (1) explain the [statement] that 'Faith is innate'? (2) explain how this doubt in one's ability to embody the Three Jewels is acquired, and of what it consists: (3) advise us on what action we should take to rid ourselves, and perhaps others, of it?

S.: Let's take those one by one. What was the first one?

Mike: Could you explain that [statement] that 'Faith is innate'?

S.: As far as I remember (I have to add that proviso), when I formulated that little aphorism I was thinking of faith in a very general sense; thinking of faith, one might say, in terms of faith in life. Suppose you take a child, and suppose you say to the child: 'Put out your hand and I'll give you a sweetie.' Assuming that the child has been brought up in a positive group, what will the child do? It will immediately put out its hand. In other words, it has got the faith that you will give it the sweetie. Do you see what I mean? It has faith in you. But supposing you don't give the child the sweetie, you just laugh and say, 'Ha ha, ever been caught?' or something to that effect; if the child has a few experiences of that sort it will lose its faith; it will acquire doubt. In that way, doubt is acquired. In the same way, I have said, I believe, in

the past that it is natural to tell the truth. A child will always tell the truth; if you ask it a question it will just give you the answer. It learns, in one way or another, to tell a lie. Sometimes it seems to teach itself; but nonetheless the original tendency, so to speak, is to tell the truth. So it is in this sort of sense that I say that faith is natural or innate, and doubt acquired; faith in the broader sense of faith in life. And, of course, if your faith in life was sustained and you never developed doubt, even in the ordinary sense and that might have happened in the Buddha's day in the case of certain people who were brought up in a very positive environment then, when you were taught some spiritual truth by people you trusted and revered, you would have faith in what you were told; and because you had faith in it you would act upon it, and because you acted upon it you would make progress. But very, very few people nowadays seem to have that sort of faith. That sort of faith does not seem to survive the years of infancy, almost, one might say. I can personally remember, from my own childhood, experiences which led me to disbelieve in the justice of adults. I can recall the instances quite clearly, when I lost my faith in the justice of adults which I formerly had had.

Mike: So does a child have any kind of innate faith in its own abilities, or where does it lose faith in its own competence(?)?

S.: I don't think one can say I'm not a child psychologist but I don't think one can say that a child has, right at the beginning, faith in itself in the way, the reflexive way, almost that an adult has. Nonetheless, the child, if brought up properly, which mainly means brought up properly by its parents, does develop faith in itself in a way in a quite natural manner. For instance, when the baby is crawling about on the floor, the parents encourage it to walk when it starts trying to walk. The parents don't discourage it, don't laugh at it; [they] help it, but unobtrusively, and also don't try to force it to walk before it is really ready. So the parents watch the child carefully, they see the child trying to do something [89] and unobtrusively they help, they always encourage. And that gradually builds up self-confidence in the child. Because, from time to time, in the case of many children, there is some catastrophic interruption to that process. For instance, to give you an example which I know often happens, the parents might move and the child might have to go to a new school. Well, in the old school he was well abreast, perhaps, of everybody else in his class, but when he goes to the new school there is a slightly different curriculum, he is a bit out of synch, and he finds himself actually behind everybody else in the class. That can have a quite traumatic effect, and can make him feel that he is not as good as others in a general sort of way, and that can then proceed to handicap him, even for the rest of his life. And you get all sorts of experiences; your self-confidence may have, if you are unlucky, one shock after another. Say some young men, some adolescents, may fall in love and they are violently rebuffed, perhaps, by the person they fall in love with, they start developing a lack of self-confidence in their own attractiveness, desirability, success with the opposite sex, and that perhaps has a psychologically crippling effect on them; all sorts of things like that can happen. But if your parents handle you carefully and wisely, and the wider society handles you carefully and wisely, and your teachers handle you carefully and wisely, if that process can be continued, say, up to about the age of, I would say, perhaps 15 or 16, if you are lucky, then I think your self-confidence will be pretty invincible; it would take a lot after that really to knock or damage your self-confidence. But it is not that you have it all fully developed to begin with, and it is a question of it surviving: no, it just has the germ of it to begin with, as you have the germ of practically everything else. It has to be built up and helped to develop stage by stage. It is even the same within the positive group, within the spiritual community. One always has to be encouraging with people. A lot of people come along to the FWBO with very damaged

self-esteem, one might say; some of them with very little self-esteem at all, and you have to be very careful that you don't knock their already quite fragile self-esteem, you have to help build it up. With just a single over-critical word, you can put someone back months and months, and even scare him away from the FWBO altogether. Not that your critical word was unjustified, but in the circumstances it was not a wise thing to do to give expression to that word. For instance, when someone gives his very first talk in a speakers' class maybe it's dreadful, but maybe he is shaking with fright and had a sleepless night but he has just forced himself to give that 10minute talk; well, maybe it is dreadful, but the important thing is he has given it. So there is no point in tearing it to pieces and telling him it is dreadful. At that stage all that he needs is encouragement; just slap him on the back and congratulate him on giving the talk, just let's leave it at that. You can criticize later on, when his self-confidence has been built up. So one has to be a bit skilful in this kind of way. It is very easy for those who know a little to discourage those who don't know anything at all.

Mark: Is it true that this common lack of self-esteem is typical of Western society, or is it ?

S.: Well, I am tempted to think that it is. As I told you, I have spent a lot of time in India, and I would say a lot of Indians, if anything, have too much self-esteem! But I am afraid it's true; especially the higher caste people, they are oozing self-esteem and complacency. They have far, far too much if it is possible to have too much; or they have the wrong sort of self-esteem. But, yes, in comparison, as far as my personal contacts go, and nowadays they are mainly limited to the FWBO, a lot of people seem lacking in self-esteem and self-confidence. One can't over-generalise from that, because maybe it is those sort of people who tend to come, or belong, to the FWBO. What things are like outside, I [90] can't really say, but I suspect that they are not all that good; but that is only a suspicion.

Chairman: Steve has the next question.

Steve: At the bottom of page 19, Gampopa lists three kinds of confidences: trusting, longing and lucid. (1) Can you say why Gampopa has listed these in, as I see it, descending order? (2) Does trusting confidence correspond with irreversibility? If so, can we draw a parallel with the three levels of Going for Refuge which you give, i.e. lucid with provisional, longing with effective, and trusting with real? (3) Can you explain the reference to note 35, to do with subliminal activity? Perhaps if we go through those one by one.

S.: All right.

Steve: So the first one is: Can you say why Gampopa has listed these [confidences] in descending order from trusting, through longing, to lucid?

S.: I am not so sure that they are necessarily in that kind of order. If one looks at them one sees, for instance, Gampopa says: "'Trusting confidence" originates in the inevitable relation between Karma and its results, in the Truths of misery and its origination', etc. etc. 'It is the conviction that the five constituents of sullied ... existence, called the Truth of Misery, are obtained by having lived a life ruled by Karma and conflicting emotions, which two factors are called the Truth of the Origination of Misery.' So 'trusting confidence' would appear to pertain to the first two Truths, and 'longing confidence' which 'means that having recognized enlightenment to be something particularly valuable, we study the path for its attainment with eagerness' that would seem to pertain to the second of the two Truths, 3 and 4. So I think one

could not, for that reason, regard trusting confidence as being higher than longing confidence or even longing confidence as higher than trusting confidence; inasmuch as one refers to one set of two Truths and the other refers to the other set of two Truths. And, of course, 'lucid confidence' pertains to or is concerned with the Three Jewels. I doubt if one can arrange them, therefore, in a hierarchical order. But these three kinds of confidence, or faith, are dealt with, of course, in Mind in Buddhist Psychology more extensively and, of course, in the seminar that we did have on that text some years ago.

Steve: That basically deals with the second question as well. Can you therefore explain the reference to note 35, which was to do with subliminal activity in trust and confidence? The term is anenjya karman.

S.: Note 35... earlier. Ah. 'It is the conviction that as a result of good and wholesome deeds the pleasures, and of evil deeds the misery, of the world of sensuality arises, while through subliminal activity the pleasures of the two worlds higher than that of sensuality emerge.' The two worlds are, of course, the rupaloka and the arupaloka. So the karmas that result in the experience of, or rebirth in, the higher worlds are of a more subtle nature, or as Guenther calls them rather confusingly, more subliminal nature. Do you see what I mean? He is merely saying that gross karmas result in rebirth on the kamaloka level, and subtle [91] karmas in rebirth on the rupaloka or arupaloka level. That is all he is really saying.

Steve: I wondered if it had something to do with meditative experience ...

S.: Well, yes, of course, yes; because the kind of good karma that results in rebirth in the rupaloka or arupaloka is, of course, closely connected with meditative experience, or even consists in that. So by subliminal he simply means more subtle, or in a sense more skilful. 'Subliminal' is rather an odd term to use in this connection, but that is Guenther, I am afraid! I am afraid you have to remain a bit on your toes when reading him. You also have to check that from book to book he doesn't change his usages.

Chairman: Mike, did you have the three parts of your question answered?

Mike: I think you partly answered the second one. I was wondering whether the lack of confidence is just simply a case of lack of metta for yourself, or does it consist of something else?

S.: I think it is more than lack of metta, though connected with it; because why does one grow up with a lack of metta for oneself? I think it is natural leaving aside, perhaps, karma inherited from previous lives to love yourself. If you don't love yourself, well, why don't you? I think it is usually because other people don't love you, and you are aware that they don't love you; and you as it were introject that, you start thinking that you are not worthy of love, so you don't love yourself, you don't have metta towards yourself. But I think that is the result of unfortunate negative conditioning, even wrong upbringing. Sometimes parents try to manage or manipulate children by instilling feelings of guilt and unworthiness and so on. They do it, of course, unconsciously, but that happens.

Mike: How would you say that we can rid ourselves of that and our inability to ...?

S.: Well, in a way, you can't. You can't undo the past. You have learned that people cannot be

trusted. You know that they can't be trusted; so how can you have faith in them? So your faith, I am afraid, inevitably is somewhat qualified. But this refers to faith in life; life will let you down, people will let you down. The only things that don't let you down are the Three Jewels, and that is why you take refuge in them. So, in some ways, up to a point, being let down by life or being let down by other people is not a bad thing, because then you start looking for something that won't let you down.

Mike: But thinking in terms of lack of faith in our own ability and ... how can we actually break that fetter?

S.: I think you have to associate with people who do, to some extent at least, embody the Three Jewels or faith in the Three Jewels, and something of that will eventually rub off on you; and they may succeed in convincing you that you too have the same capacity that they have, that you are not all that different from what they are. And you actually may begin to feel it after a while, and in that way develop the confidence that you can achieve what they have achieved. One does in fact see this happening in so many ways within the Movement, within the FWBO; there are all sorts of things that people, to begin with, think that they can't do, but sooner or later they discover that they can, and they thereafter have greater faith in themselves and in their own capacities in all sorts of ways, on all sorts of levels very often when they are left on their own. I think most of you know that Vajraketu wasn't able to go back to Bombay, so the young Indian [92] Order Members he was working with have had to do all sorts of things that he used to do, and which they apparently before were quite convinced they couldn't do; now they are doing them! perhaps to their surprise, and now they no doubt have much greater confidence in themselves than they had. One finds this sort of thing happening all the time.

: Referring to this question about faith in Gampopa's terms, could you say anything about any possible relationship between faith as Gampopa elucidates it and faith as you elucidate it in The Three Jewels, the three successive levels of intuitive, rational and experiential? They seem to tie up to this.

S.: Well, in a way, intuitive faith is faith that precedes experience. There is just a sort of inner resonance in accordance with the object that is in front of you. There is that spontaneous attraction to it, if you like, to which you can give a rational justification, or rational explanation, but it doesn't really depend upon that. Though you could say it's the faith which is subsequently confirmed by experience. You feel trust as it were intuitively in the Buddha, but subsequently you find from your own experience that, yes, the Buddha can be trusted, because whatever you formerly had trust in has been subsequently confirmed in your own experience.

: I was thinking that when Gampopa gives his definition of faith it's presented as 'There it is', whereas faith as you describe it intuition through rational through to experiential is a definite progression. It is almost as if you have to develop trusting, longing and lucid in one go, there doesn't seem to be a mechanism for it to develop; and I think Gampopa

S.: Well, perhaps one could apply that division of intuitive, rational and experiential to all these three kinds of faith that Gampopa mentions. One could perhaps look at them and see whether that is possible. In some ways, his presentation is a little schematic, because he ties faith up with the Four Noble Truths including the Eightfold Path, of course and with the

Three Jewels, and my particular classification or framework is much more general.

: Does he couch it in those terms because of his bias, or do you think there is any particular reason he couches it in those terms?

S.: He is probably following tradition. He is following the tradition of the Abhidharma Samuccaya as represented by Mind in Buddhist Psychology.

How are we getting on, by the way?

Chairman: We've got three to go yet.

Pavel: It seems that Gampopa in his classification sometimes does not observe logical rules, which he considers should be observed in classification. So it seems that there are sometimes certain inconsistencies. I can give a few examples. On p.14, he says that 'unique occasion' and 'right juncture' belong to the body, and the three kinds of confidence to mind. However, 'unique occasion' means, among others, to be free from erroneous views and stupidity. Also confidence in foundation of spiritual life, attuning to the stability of the elements of existence and compassion are among the events effecting right juncture; these all seem to belong rather to the mind than to the body. Moreover, confidence is ...ly and the three kinds of confidence. Also the division of right juncture into direct and mediating events seems to be inconsistent; confidence is considered direct and attuning to stability indirect. As ..., Gampopa is a different kind of reasoning.

[93]

S.: Well, I suppose it can't, strictly speaking, be a different kind of reasoning. Reason is reason, logic is logic. One might say there is a saying 'Even Homer nods', so perhaps even Gampopa is little unmindful at times. One might also say that perhaps a certain inconsistency arises when one tries to match two sets of terms which don't really match, one tries to see correspondences which aren't really fully there. Nonetheless, I think probably it is advisable to look very carefully into what Gampopa says and analyse it very carefully, very closely, before coming to a definite conclusion that there is an inconsistency. But if one does in the end conclude that, yes, there is actually an inconsistency, well, Gampopa was human and no doubt we can forgive him his little inconsistencies for the sake of the work as a whole. But certainly we should read him critically, and not be afraid to face up to inconsistencies if there are any there.

Pavel: In the examples I gave, I am not sure how these inconsistencies ...

S.: On the face of it, they do appear to be, but I think I would like to look into them a little more deeply before concluding that they definitely were inconsistencies. But they might be.

: I suppose I was thinking ... Gampopa ...attitude towards death. I am wondering what you think the attitude towards death .. current in our ... in our society has arisen. Would it perhaps ... worship?

S.: Say that again.

: I am wondering about the morbid attitude towards death in our society ...

S.: I think first of all we have to look at the facts. This is something we often say; perhaps I have said it myself. But do you think it is actually a fact? To begin with, let's be sure of our facts that people do have a morbid, what did you say, fear of death?

: Attitude towards it.

S.: Attitude towards it, and that the discussion of it is taboo; do we really know that that is the case, say, in Britain, in a way that it is not, let us say, in the East, in India, or some other part of the world? Are we sure about our facts to begin with? This is all I am inquiring initially.

Dhammarati: I have heard ... on good authority that suggested that ... (laughter).

S.: Well, one might even look critically at one's good authorities, if they are talking about matters of fact which are within one's own power to verify quite easily.

Dharmadhara(?): It did seem from my experiences with ... I have always known ... face up to the fact that somebody actually has died, and the euphemisms with which they have referred to actual death, the way that they were screened off.

S.: But aren't there books, even novels, dealing with the subject? What about *The Loved One*? Have you heard of that?

: Evelyn Waugh.

S.: Or *The American Way of Death*, which is a novel? I must say I notice a bit of a difference this is in England among age groups. [94] I have noticed that perhaps very old people are not so inhibited when it comes to facing up to death or talking about it; it is so near, they have seen so many of their own friends of roughly their own age die, so they become in a sense a bit sort of hardened to it, they don't bother quite so much. But, apart from that, do people really feel, or have people observed or seen in their own experience, that there is a morbid attitude towards death?

Dhammarati: There is an example, I think, of some friends of mine ... dying, and there was quite a heated discussion in the family whether or not to tell him, and in effect ... can't communicate with him, because they don't want to end up ...the fact that he is going to die, ... that experience.

S.: Perhaps doctors, to some extent, are to blame here. I have to be careful exactly what I say! Some doctors, I believe I have heard take the view that you shouldn't say anything to upset or depress the patient, because that might affect their chance of recovery; and if you say, 'Well, look, you have only a 5050 chance of recovery', that could affect them in such a way that in fact they have only a ten per cent. chance of recovery. Do you see what I mean?

Dhammarati: In this case, there is no chance of recovery, but they are reluctant to acknowledge the inevitable fact that they are about to die. Doesn't that suggest that there is some basic inability to work ... basic experience ... face?

S.: It may or may not be morbid, but it certainly seems that there is unwillingness or reluctance to recognize the fact of death, or the inevitability of death. It may be connected

with the current lack of faith, for instance, in anything beyond death. It may have a connection with that.

: Do you think it could be due quite a lot to people's general lack of experience of death? Suvajra was saying that ... but also because of ?

S.: That is true, but why should there be that lack of experience of death? Why should undertakers huddle the body out of sight? I was reading somewhere where was it? recently, just a few days ago: I think it was in a letter that someone wrote me that's right I think it was her mother died. That's right, someone wrote to me telling me about how several years ago her mother died, and maybe I have got it a little wrong, I am not sure whether it was mother or father anyway, the case was this: this person's parent, let us say, died, and she discovered the parent dead; the parent died quite unexpectedly. So as it were quite instinctively this person just sat down beside the corpse, just quietly for a little while, just half an hour, and then went out and informed people and called the undertakers. But what was interesting when the undertaker came along, the undertaker was very solicitous, saying 'Don't mind, madam, it'll be all right, we'll remove it as quickly as we can!' And this really struck this person, because she said it was as though the undertaker seriously thought that the presence of the corpse on the premises was a serious embarrassment and naturally she, the daughter, would want it removed as quickly as possible. So the undertaker was very sympathetic and cooperative; but actually the person didn't feel like that at all, would have liked the parent's body to have remained there longer. But no doubt that person's attitude was a bit exceptional, and the undertaker was assuming that her attitude would be similar to everybody else's, wanting 'it' to be removed as quickly as possible. But how we have built up this attitude, morbid or otherwise, it is very difficult to say.

: What effect do you think could be the structure of society, say, upon in terms of nuclear families etc. you don't experience death unless it is actually in quite a small ... (?)

[95]

S.: I suppose the affluent society has got something to do with it, because in India you can't avoid the fact of death. People don't have a quiet private hospital room to go away to and die; they die at home, in full view of everybody, usually! If they are lucky they may be behind a curtain or something like that, but more often than not just in full public view, and there they are, in the morning, dead, and it's you, the members of the family and your friends, who have got to prepare the body, to hoist it on to a stretcher, to hoist the stretcher on your shoulders, and march off to the cremation ground to burn it. But, in the West, we are shielded from all that: the old person goes and dies very conveniently and thoughtfully in a hospital; perhaps you don't even see them dead. Some people don't like to see their loved ones dead. And then they are cremated, which means they are put in a little box by people professionally trained, and you may attend the funeral but even if you do you don't see anything; you wouldn't want to. The little box disappears from sight when you press the little button or someone presses the little button, and you have had Bach on the tape for two or three minutes, and that's it. This is exactly what happens. There are the officials of the crematorium looking at their watches and making signs to you that, don't forget, you've only got 25 minutes oh yes! Some of you, no doubt, have attended cremations; I certainly have. In India, it is certainly not like that; very largely because India is a poorer country it is as simple as that. But even though the West is an affluent society, we don't have to shield ourselves from the fact of death in the way that we do, in the way that people in the East often are not in a position to do. We don't have

to shield ourselves in the way that we do. So that still leaves an unanswered question.

Steve: [There is] the possibility that, like, coming from New Zealand, there is a very high incidence of road deaths and there is a lot of suffering involved in death. That sort of implies that ... shield themselves from suffering, that people experience others dying ... circumstances.

S.: It could be. If you saw the bodies of people who had died in road accidents, you might think twice about running your car any more.

Steve: I think the incidence of cancer and that kind of thing this very slow, agonizing death on the part ... experiences in the family that has quite an effect that carries on through generation after generation, and that sets up a barrier which then precludes them from confronting death.

S.: But people in India die painful deaths, too.

Steve: That's true.

S.: I sometimes wonder if it has anything to do with Christianity; I wonder whether Christianity's attitude towards death isn't a bit morbid the emphasis on the body, the body rotting and all that sort of thing, which you don't find in India, because usually you don't have a body rotting in the ground, you just have a nice, neat little handful of ashes which you can scatter in a river. But even if the body is rotting, so what? It is only organic matter decomposing and helping to push up the daisies and buttercups in country churchyards, anyway. I think we have to accept that the physical concomitants

Tape 9, Side 1

Of death are not very pleasant and people naturally shrink from them, and perhaps we can refrain from shrinking from them only when we are supported by quite strong religious faith in something beyond death, which of course nowadays in the West many people don't have, and perhaps which they didn't really have even when they were supposed to be Christians, because they used the language of 'Little [96] Willie going to heaven' or whatever, but they weep for him all the same; almost as though he had gone to the other place!

Steve: There also appears to be a certain amount of experience that, when someone dies and, as you pointed out, there is a lack of faith in after, a sort of continuance of life, a certain part of that person stays alive as long as ... that person. It tends to be something which they can't

S.: If you don't have faith in something after death, well, a person's death reminds you of the futility of existence, including the futility of your own existence. Especially if they die young under tragic conditions and so on. Anyway, all that I was doing at the beginning was just trying to emphasize that we should not necessarily accept as gospel, so to speak, even those attitudes that we do find current within, say, the FWBO, if there is the possibility of our independently verifying them within our own experience. If it's accepting something about Nirvana or the higher stages of the Path, that's another matter, but if it is with regard to facts and circumstances that you can check up on for yourself, well, check up by all means.

Chairman: Kevin's got a point

Kevin: Bhante, do you think we should start making provision for people dying within the Movement ourselves, and taking it away from society?

S.: Provision in what sense? Having our own crematorium ?

Kevin: Yes.

S.: I think we should. But we need to be financially and all that in a position to do so. I think it is inevitable, sooner or later. It would be much nicer if we had our own crematorium. Instead of being rushed and just having to do it all in 25 minutes we could have, say, 35 minutes! (Laughter.) It would give you a bit of elbow room, a bit of leeway... it wouldn't be commercially viable, it would probably be running at a loss, I don't know; we will have to look into that later.

: Would it be Right Livelihood?

S.: Oh, I think it would be Right Livelihood, all right, yes. Excellent! (Laughter.) Provided you didn't use the same coffin twice, as some crematoria nowadays do, after removing the brass fittings! They deny it hotly, of course, but !

Prasannasiddhi: I think Vangisa's funeral seemed to go quite well. We only had a few minutes in the crematorium, but he was laid out in the LBC for quite

S.: Yes, the proceedings were not confined to the crematorium, and they need not be. As you say, we can always lay somebody out in our own place, and there is always the possibility of a memorial meeting and so on, punyanamodhana (?) in addition to the business of actually disposing of the remains, as they are usually called or 'it'!

Chairman: The last question goes to Murray.

Murray: This question arose out of the discussion just after ...generate ... to appreciate positive qualities in terms of what we have got, and also self-criticism in terms of what we could improve. The question is: I have heard it said that you are annoyed at being referred to as 'the Boss'. (S. chuckles.) In general, what sort of things annoy you about people and the Movement in general? (Laughter.)

[97]

S.: It is rather putting the cat among the pigeons, isn't it? It is a question of who is the cat and who are the pigeons! I don't personally mind being referred to as 'the Boss', but I think it can give a rather unfortunate impression. It can give the impression of sort of authoritarianism, which I would like to think is quite unjustified! (Laughter.) So perhaps something less seemingly authoritative than that expression can be substituted. What else was there?

Murray: And in general, what sort of things annoy you about people and the Movement?

S.: I suppose in theory nothing should annoy me at all! (Laughter.) ... in theory. But I must say that I am sometimes annoyed on principle, as it were I have almost sometimes forced myself to be annoyed, because I ought to be annoyed! Sometimes, fortunately, my practice accords with my theory! I think the sort of things that do annoy me are expressions of unmindfulness,

especially when the unmindfulness seems quite culpable, and when the unmindfulness is of such a nature that you think, well, [not] to speak of someone committed to the spiritual path, say, if it is an Order Member, even an ordinary, reasonably thoughtful human being should not be guilty of that kind of thoughtlessness, that kind of unmindfulness. I think this is what perhaps 'annoys' isn't quite the right word; I think there is a strong element of disappointment mixed up with it, too; it is not just annoyance. Though there are certain things that as it were grate on one's nerves, almost as when people insist on scraping their chairs quite unnecessarily, and things of that sort. But I think it is basically the unmindfulness expressing itself in a certain way that one would have thought it just wouldn't have done that the person concerned would not have been unmindful to that extent. Though one might ask: 'Why unmindfulness? Why does unmindfulness upset one to such an extent?' I think, in some ways, unmindfulness is the basic unskilful state in a way, just as mindfulness is almost the basic skilful state; because in order to practise any skilful, any positive quality, you have to be mindful of the need to practise it. So mindfulness would seem to come first in any case. I also sometimes feel annoyed if I find people doing things about which they have been told many, many times, which they know as it were are not skilful things to do, which in theory at least they don't want to do, but out of force of habit they do just go on doing them. I must say I think I feel disappointed I think 'disappointed' is the word here rather than 'annoyed' when people meet with or are confronted by a new situation but behave in that new situation so mechanically that they do something wrong, when one would have expected them to be able to exercise a bit of initiative, original intelligence, and not commit that particular mistake. I know, within the Movement, even within the Order, there are certain persons that I can rely upon to exercise what I call their original intelligence; but I am afraid they are surprisingly few. You would be surprised or perhaps you wouldn't how few people there are who can exercise that original intelligence; that is to say an intelligence which doesn't need to be programmed beforehand with regard to the situation, who are capable of meeting a new situation, the challenge of a new situation, even in a quite minor way, intelligently and with resourcefulness.

Murray: So you are talking about a spontaneous awareness ?

S.: Not just awareness of the situation, but also awareness of what needs to be done, when it is something that you haven't encountered before, when the situation is unprecedented. A lot of people really slip up in this respect, or fail to meet the challenge of that sort of situation. Also, I think I also get disappointed, rather than annoyed, when people fail to exercise forethought. They can't see what is coming, and very often you think they [98] really ought to have seen what was coming, they ought to have been able to plan ahead, or think ahead, to a greater extent than they actually have done. I am trying to think, actually because there must be something that is annoying, more than I have mentioned. Yes, one thing that annoys me very slightly, but it does annoy me just a little bit is when people write to me (that's all right, that doesn't annoy me) but at the top of the letter they put: 'On retreat', and they sign it 'John' or 'Mary', and then I have to think: 'Who on earth is it writing?' because there are lots of people called John in the Movement and lots of people called Mary, and they don't give any address, they just put 'On retreat, Thursday', or something like that, and before I can reply I have to work out who it is, and I have got to hunt around for their address, or rather get Subhuti or Kovida to hunt around for their address, and all that is time lost. So that does annoy me just a tiny bit.

Murray: So you don't get sort of outrageously angry?

S.: No, I'm afraid I don't! I also don't like I don't think it annoys me, but I don't like people writing to me on dirty scraps of paper. Sometimes people do. It is as though they don't care about their letter, they don't care about their communication, and in a sense don't care about you, perhaps don't care about themselves; and that creates a rather unfortunate impression. But that doesn't happen very often; people write or type quite nicely, quite neatly. But from time to time I get a letter scribbled on a dirty scrap of paper, or a sheet torn out of an exercise book, torn out rather roughly, and so on.

Dhammarati: I would like to make a couple of points about Order Members' original intelligence. Around the LBC there are a lot of young Order Members coming back from Tuscany complaining about how their initiative and their nascent original intelligence is frustrated by the inertia of the elder Order Members. Do you think we are doing enough to develop the skills of younger, less experienced Order Members?

S.: I think people should perhaps concentrate, in the case of the older Order Members, on developing their own skills more. I think then there wouldn't be any problem, because if your skills as an older Order Member are all well developed and active and flourishing, the younger Order Members when they came back from Tuscany would just fit into that situation and benefit from it. So I don't think one is to think in terms of what to do for the younger Order Members; they are quite able to look after themselves nowadays. I think it is the older Order Members, perhaps, in some cases at least, who need to look after themselves and perhaps, in some cases, even, pull their socks up a bit. (Laughter.) But it is in a way rather sad, rather disheartening, and it has sometimes happened, at least in certain cases, when young Order Members newly ordained have come back from Tuscany to a particular centre, wherever it happens to be, and have found a certain inertia on the part of the Order Members there, a certain sluggishness, so they are not met with the response or enthusiasm that in a way they had a right to expect. So one should not try to increase one's own enthusiasm just for the sake of those returning young Order Members; no, do it for your own sake as well as for the sake of everyone you are in contact with, in your own centre and elsewhere. The new young returning Order Members will benefit automatically anyway.

Dhammarati: ... a justified complaint ... ?

S.: No, I must say from my own observation in some cases it has been a justified complaint, yes. At least in certain cases and certain instances. It is very easy to lose that beginner's mind, as it were; it is quite easy, even in the spiritual life, if you are not careful, to become a matter of routine, and you do lose your sharpness, you lose your brightness. You may not notice it, because your sharpness [99] or your brightness are diminished little by little, day by day; you don't realize what has happened. But people returning from Tuscany are very sharp and very bright, and they at once experience the difference. So I think Order Members should watch themselves, and make sure that they do keep themselves in a state of sharpness and brightness, as I have called it. One can go away on solitary retreat; one can avoid unfavourable situations, unskilful situations. There are all sorts of things one can do which one knows very well.

Gerry: Is this sharpness and brightness the same thing as the quality of freedom that you mentioned before?

S.: Well, I am using the expressions, obviously, quite as it were metaphorically. I mean,

basically, very positive and very aware. But inasmuch as people are not Stream Entrants, they can fall back. So one needs, for one's own sake, and for the sake of ordinary ..., to make the conditions in the midst of which one is living and working as an Order Member or a Mitra or whatever, as supportive, spiritually speaking, as one possibly can.

Chairman: OK, one last point. We have now got to the end of this chapter on the Working Basis, dealing with unique occasion, right juncture, and the three types of confidence. Are there any points in the chapter that you would like to raise that we have not raised already?

S.: I have obviously gone through the chapter, but I don't think there are any points that I particularly wanted personally to raise. If there are any points arising out of future chapters I will bring them up. But I think the third chapter is on Meeting Spiritual Friends, which quite a few people, I believe, regard themselves as almost, what shall I say? specializing in either meeting or being met, or both. So you probably will have quite a good study and come up with quite a few quite brilliant questions!

Voices: Thank you, Bhante.

[100]

[24.9.85 Tape 10, Side 1][Transfer first minute or two of tape, as far as break in recording, to end of Side 2.]

Dhammarati: [from written questions] Before coming here, a Mitra I know had an argument with his Church of England clergyman father. The father couldn't understand what the son was doing. He felt if he accepted the son's Buddhism as valid it invalidated what he had been doing for the last 30 years [from break: 13 on counter] and the impression I got was that there wasn't any language that the son could use to make his experience comprehensible to the father. But in the Mitrata Omnibus, in the section on the Spiral Path, you talk about 'the Unconditioned, the Absolute', and then, in brackets, 'call it even God if you like'. Do you think it is possible, if we define our terms carefully enough, to use Christian language in a way that would make our experience comprehensible to a Christian?

S.: This depends on a number of factors. Of course, to begin with, not many people nowadays say, many so-called Christians are even well educated in Christianity; for instance, in Christian theology. So even if you were to select your Christian terms very carefully, they might not know what you were talking about. Also I think one has to be very careful that, in using Christian terms, one does not falsify one's own experience. I am not quite sure of the context from which that particular Mitrata quotation is taken, but I do remember that quite recently, when someone asked me about the use of terms like 'God', for instance, in a beginners' class, I said that if new people make use of Christian terms in asking questions or whatever, or in the course of discussion, you should not be in too much of a hurry to pick them up; because those are, perhaps, the only terms that they know. You should try to get at the sense of the question rather than quarrel over particular expressions. Nonetheless, if someone does have a serious belief in God and does attach a very definite meaning to that concept a concept which is incompatible with Buddhism then, if one is challenged, one cannot but say that in Buddhism we don't believe in God, so there is not that sort of common ground between us. If someone who just does not have any other term at his disposal, so to speak, just uses the term 'God' because he wants to indicate whatever is highest or whatever is best, even the Absolute, one need not quarrel with that if he uses it in a very broad, general,

nontechnical sense. One might even, on occasion, oneself very cautiously introduce that term into discussion for the sake of facilitating communication, but only in a very broad, general way. One could not use it in its precise traditional sense. Therefore, if one is discussing these sort of issues with someone who has perhaps what shall I say? a convinced Christian faith and who knows something about his religion, perhaps one should avoid more basic issues to begin with and explore, say, other issues. For instance, if that particular person finds it difficult to understand why you don't believe in God, and if he feels your non-belief invalidating his belief, as perhaps it does do, then you can always explore, to begin with, other issues for instance, prayer as compared with meditation, reason in spiritual life as compared with emotion in spiritual life. Try to explore possible areas of agreement with regard to such issues, rather than tackling really quite basic, fundamental issues straight away. Sooner or later, perhaps, one will have to get around to discussing those issues, but perhaps it is just as well to have tried to prepare the ground first. [101] In the last resort, of course, perhaps individuals do have to accept that other individuals may differ from them on important issues, even quite radically and quite irreconcilably. One then just has to fall back upon one's common humanity and express one's mutual good will notwithstanding.

Dhammarati: Would you see that at a point in the future Buddhist ideas would start to affect mainstream Christianity? Do you think that's ... ?

S.: I think it is very difficult to say. I think that, in a pluralistic and almost ecumenical world, one religion is going to affect another. It is not just even a question of Buddhism affecting Christianity; perhaps Christianity will affect Buddhism. Of course, 'affecting' does not necessarily mean 'influencing'. One religion may affect another by forcing it to define its position more accurately or more precisely. Do you see what I mean? Nonetheless, I think, in one way or another, positively or negatively, we can anticipate the different religions of the world perhaps influencing one another to a far greater extent in the future than they have done in the past; but exactly what form that will take it is quite difficult to say. Some Christians coming in contact with Buddhism become more broad-minded; others coming in contact with Buddhism become more narrow-minded! A lot, perhaps, depends on the individual as well as on the actual religion he happens to follow.

Chairman: The next question is from John on The Fear of Freedom and Buddhism.

John: Eric Fromm, in his book The Fear of Freedom, suggests that as individual freedom increases so does a tendency to take refuge in authoritarianism. (1) Does this have any connection with an increase in monasticism in later Indian Buddhism? (2) Has it any ramifications for the FWBO, particularly as it grows larger in the future?

S.: What was the first question?

John: Whether you felt that this had any connection with the increase in monasticism in

S.: What, precisely, had any connection?

John: Well, this fear of freedom [and] taking refuge in authoritarianism.

S.: I am not sure that there was any taking refuge in authoritarianism in later Buddhism in India ?

John: Well, this is what I'm asking, really.

S.: One might have spoken of taking refuge in security, economic security; because whenever any religion becomes established it becomes, perhaps, a means of livelihood for people, in a way that it was not in the early days. But if one looked to religion, to monastic life, as a source of security, that would not quite mean that one was afraid of freedom, because in the monasteries in India, throughout the history of Buddhism in India, there was a great deal of intellectual freedom that was very important. So I don't see where a flight from freedom in the sense of a seeking after authority comes in; that doesn't seem very relevant, it doesn't seem to connect at all, in the case of Indian Buddhism. Seeking, perhaps, after security, yes; but flight from intellectual or spiritual freedom, I [102] think is quite another question. What was your second question?

John: Whether this had any ramifications for the FWBO as it grew bigger. I suppose I am thinking of

S.: Are you thinking of authority or, again, security?

John: Well, if people might be attracted to it for security, yes.

S.: Yes, but authority and security are two quite different things.

John: I suppose what I am saying is that what Fromm suggests is, as people become more free, so what happens is there is an increase in the sort of existential fear that they have.

S.: I can't help feeling that Fromm, in suggesting perhaps he made the suggestion in the '50s that people had become more free, was being rather naive. Are people very free? What is freedom? I think that needs to be looked at first. Is it that people have got so much freedom these days that they are afraid of it and are trying to escape from it or trying to find some refuge from it? Is that in fact the position? Have any of you experienced so much freedom, outside the FWBO, that you were just terrified of it, couldn't handle it, and came seeking refuge in the FWBO so that you should be relieved of this responsibility of freedom? Is that actually what happens, or might happen in the future? I think, if anything, nowadays at least, people come into the FWBO looking for freedom rather than trying to get away from it; maybe looking for it in small quantities to begin with. But I think looking for it rather than trying to get away from it, at least at present.

John: But as they become more free, once they have joined the FWBO, they become more free of social conditionings or whatever, is there then a danger that people do actually start experiencing fear of that freedom?

S.: Well, I think you will just have to ask people! Some people might say they don't have enough freedom in the FWBO, and would like a bit more. Some people find it difficult to get away for retreats when they want to, or to do all the study that they would like. They might say that they would like a bit more freedom within the FWBO, not less. So I think perhaps we need to look at our assumptions here.

Prasannasiddhi: Haven't you talked at some time of the existential fear that one contacts at one stage in meditation, and which one has to overcome?

S.: Yes, I have talked of that. I think I have also said that there is not even any question of overcoming it, because it is so basic that you can't really do anything about it. Sooner or later, it seems to pass off. But there doesn't seem to be any relation to its passing off and anything that you might do or not do. I think that is on a quite different level. I think that is of such a nature that when you experience it you can't even try to get away from it; there is just nothing you can do about it. In a sense, you have to endure it, though you don't have any choice, even, with regard to whether you do that or don't do that.

John: Could you say, Bhante, if you have had any thoughts about why Fromm suggests that the rise of Fascism was connected with this process. Have you had any thoughts about the rise

[103]

S.: The rise of fascism, presumably, he means in Italy and Germany; but were the peoples of Italy and Germany, prior to the rise of fascism, enjoying so much freedom that they wanted to abandon it and hand it over to the fascists? I don't remember what led to the rise of fascism in Italy, but as far as I remember, as regards Germany, it was economic insecurity, fear of the rise of communism, and so on; not that they had so much freedom that they hastened to hand it over to a party that was willing to exercise it for them. Perhaps Fromm's book belongs to the optimistic '50s rather than to the, shall we say, alienated '80s?

Pavel: Maybe it is a fear of responsibility, because [to be] free is [to be] responsible.

S.: Yes, I think a lot of people don't want responsibility; they like to hand over responsibility for themselves. I think that is very often just due to laziness.

Pavel: Do people in the FWBO have more responsibility than outside it or how it relates to responsibility?

S.: I think it differs, because there is a responsibility that you incur voluntarily, and a responsibility that you feel perhaps has been just thrust upon you, or that you incurred without really realizing what you were doing. For instance, say, at the age of 18 you fell in love and then you got married a few months later; well, when you got married in that way you took on responsibilities, especially if you found that you had not only a wife but a child, also a mortgage, etc. So in that way you would find yourself encumbered with responsibilities which, yes, you had incurred but not really with full knowledge and awareness of what you were doing. That is one kind of situation. You might resent being in that sort of situation, but on the other hand, as an Order Member, with full awareness and sense of due responsibility, you might accept a certain task, a certain duty or a certain responsibility, however difficult, and quite willingly and happily discharge it, despite all those difficulties. That would be quite a different kind of situation. So people within the FWBO don't necessarily whether as Order Members or others, but especially Order Members have less responsibility than outside; very often they have more than they might have had outside, but their attitude towards it is different, because it is a responsibility that they have taken on quite knowingly with their eyes open and in fact have taken on quite happily. Sometimes, of course, it happens that a Mitra or a young Order Member, out of enthusiasm, actually takes on more than he is able to take on, and when he then finds himself in that position he may experience a certain amount of resentment or frustration; he may even have to backtrack. But if he listens to his spiritual friends or consults his spiritual friends, at least, and listens to them, he won't be very likely to get into that position in the first place.

Bram: Bhante, is this fear of responsibility caused by lack of confidence instead of laziness?

S.: Hm, lack of confidence, responsibility it depends what the responsibility involves. If the responsibility involves doing something that you feel you are not capable of doing, then of course you may be reluctant to take on that responsibility, and it may be that if that responsibility is one that you may naturally be expected to take on, you then have to try to strengthen your self-confidence so that you can assume that responsibility. If responsibility, especially self-responsibility, is one of the characteristics of the true Individual, then one also needs, in order to be a true Individual, at least a certain amount of self-confidence, because without self-confidence you cannot actually discharge the responsibilities that are incumbent upon you. So, yes, no doubt a lack of self-confidence does enter into it, too.

[104]

Chairman: The next question is from Danavira.

Danavira: Bhante, we were talking about effeminacy a few days ago... (1) Can you say something about the causes or reasons for some men becoming effeminate? (2) Do you think that for maturity to develop in the full sense in a man, he has to feel himself as potent with regard to how he finds himself and the society he lives in and in the world at large?

S.: Let's have the first question first.

Danavira: Can you say something about the causes or reasons for some men becoming effeminate?

S.: I think there are two things we need to clarify first: what one means by effeminacy, and what one means by a man 'becoming' effeminate. Does one mean that at the age of six he suddenly becomes effeminate, or at the age of 25 he suddenly becomes effeminate or what? So what does one mean, first of all, by effeminacy in the case of men? One needs to be clear about that first.

Danavira: Er

S.: Was that discussed?

Danavira: Yes, it was, actually. Some [people] thought being effeminate [meant being] gentle, tender, womanish, soft and delicate, unmanly, weak, voluptuous. That's just some of them.

S.: I would say that was a definition which offended all the canons of logic! It is an extraordinary mixture, not to say a jumble. Let's go through those characteristics one by one.

Danavira: First of all, this comes from Cassell's Dictionary and Collins' ...

S.: Well, one shouldn't mix one's dictionaries, obviously! Let's go through those adjectives.

Danavira: Gentle.

S.: Gentle. Well there is the expression 'gentleman'. Is every gentleman effeminate?

(Laughter.) Some working-class types think so! But, no, I don't think that to be gentle is to be effeminate. I wouldn't agree with that. I think gentleness is compatible with strength, it's compatible with manliness. So, no, I wouldn't agree that if a man was gentle it meant that he was effeminate. No. All right, next adjective?

Danavira: Tender.

S.: Ditto, ditto. There is also the question of appropriateness: time and place. I don't think it would be effeminate for a man to be tender where tenderness was called for. Supposing you were transplanting a very small, delicate seedling: gentleness would be appropriate, tenderness would be appropriate. You could not be accused of effeminacy if you transplanted that seedling in an appropriate manner. Let's go on.

Danavira: Womanish.

[105]

S.: Womanish, hm. 'Womanish' means 'like a woman'; but 'womanish' has a slightly pejorative ring, doesn't it? Faint, perhaps, but nonetheless unmistakable; a slightly negative ring, let us say. If a word has a definite pejorative usage in that way, it is difficult to use it positively. So if 'effeminate' is considered to be, almost by definition, pejorative, perhaps one could say that 'womanish' and 'effeminate' were more or less synonymous. So to be effeminate, I suppose, would be [to be] womanish. Not that the conception of 'womanishness' is necessarily a valid one, but if the term 'effeminate' was appropriate in any context, presumably the word 'womanish' would be appropriate in that context, too.

Danavira: Shall I go on?

S.: Yes.

Danavira: Soft and delicate.

S.: Soft; well, it's ridiculous. If you say, 'He's very soft,' what does it mean? It could mean 'He's gentle and tender'; it could mean he was soft-headed or he was a soft touch, or easy-going. What does it mean in this connection soft? There are several meanings, some of which might to some extent coincide with effeminacy, and others not. You could describe a woman as soft, I suppose. No, I think 'soft' seems quite inappropriate here. And then? Delicate? Hm: effeminacy is delicacy? I think one could look at it in several ways. One could be physically delicate, but would a man who was physically delicate, that is to say who wasn't very robust, necessarily be effeminate? In the eyes of some robust people, perhaps; but I think not really. So, no, I wouldn't say that to be delicate was to be effeminate.

Danavira: Unmanly.

S.: Unmanly. Yes, I suppose that belongs with that other term 'womanish'; 'womanish,' 'effeminate,' 'unmanly' these are more or less synonymous, though what they actually mean, all three of them, is still far from clear. But we'll go into that in a minute, perhaps.

Danavira: Weak.

S.: Weak. Weak in what sense, again? A woman can be weak; a man can be weak. Is a man who is weak necessarily effeminate? Is a man who is effeminate necessarily weak? No, it doesn't seem very clear, does it? Then?

Danavira: Voluptuous. (Laughter.)

S.: I suppose one doesn't usually describe men as voluptuous, but I am not sure that 'effeminate' is necessarily synonymous with 'voluptuous', or 'voluptuous' with 'effeminate'. You would perhaps describe a certain man as effeminate, but I have never actually heard a man described as voluptuous. Maybe my reading has not been of the right sort, but it does seem to be irrelevant in this connection, not a true synonym.

Danavira: There were a few others, but I haven't got them down. One of the Collins dictionaries ... fear, and

S.: No, when one speaks of a man being effeminate, I think usually what is meant is that a man has attitudes or behaviour which are usually considered appropriate to a woman. Now the question still remains whether [they are] considered appropriate to or characteristic of a woman rightfully or wrongfully. But I think 'effeminate' as applied to a man has this slightly pejorative meaning, but I think it begs all sorts of questions. It suggests that at the back of the term is the implication that a man should be a man and a woman a woman, sort of [106] thing, and that if a man has any characteristics which are usually considered characteristics of women or typical of women, that results in some impairment of his masculinity in a negative sense. So what was the original question?

Danavira: Can you say something about the causes or reasons for some men becoming effeminate?

S.: 'Becoming' effeminate? So some men come to take on, at some stage of their lives, for some reason or other, certain characteristics which are generally considered to be not only more appropriate to women but characteristics which men ought not to take on, almost. So where does that leave us?

: Within the context of the study group, Bhante,

S.: Yes, how did the question arise?

: ... general discussion of homosexuality it came up [as a] component.

S.: It has been suggested that sex is on some people's minds, these days!

: [and that] there was a difference between, say, a man's homosexual and quite sort of natural way if he's affectionate, he's tender etc., but then you also seem to get this other type the sort of queen, or There's a sort of sense of a certain false aspect of behaviour with effeminacy. I think that was the general gist of it.

S.: There is a certain type of person colloquially known as 'queens', as you say. I have seen, I have almost known, such people; I have certainly read about them. If one reads Genet, for instance, you get some quite extraordinary descriptions of people of this sort; one doesn't

know whether to say 'men' of this sort or not, but people. Nonetheless, whatever one's own feelings may be, that sort of behaviour, it seems, is quite natural to that sort of person, however extraordinary it may seem to the average male. Why they behave in that way is very difficult to say, and it may be conditioned behaviour having its roots quite deep down in their psychology, upbringing and so on. From what I have gathered, they don't ever sort of 'become' like that at a particular stage. It seems, if not actually innate, certainly to have started very early on in life, due to factors of which they are not conscious. But that kind of behaviour, which one could call effeminate but actually it is much, much more than that, is very striking and very marked. It is difficult to say what it is due to. Because it is not only feminine or womanish; such people take on feminine traits or modes of behaviour in a very exaggerated way, but to the best of my knowledge there is no conscious exaggeration. What seems to us as exaggeration is in fact, for those people, quite natural behaviour. So how does that relate to the question?

: Well, I suppose we tend to see it as there is a slightly alienated male taking on the characteristics of alienated female, as it were, and

S.: Hm, yes, this is not impossible.

: Some people have observed that it was fashionable these days for certain young men to behave in such a way, it seemed to be current coinage as it were in fashion circles. It is a matter of how this type of behaviour arose.

S.: I think, obviously, human psychology can be very complex, and one does get, yes, an alienated male taking on characteristics of the alienated female; and perhaps the alienated female taking on characteristics of the alienated male. And one [107] might find that some of the kind of people that we have been talking about are of this description. As regards trends in fashion, I must say I have been sometimes quite shocked or quite horrified I hope it is not just because I am old-fashioned and something left over from the '30s or '40s but I have noticed that, just looking at the colour supplements sometimes, female models seem to be of a certain type these days. They are usually quite angular, a bit masculine, and they usually have most unpleasant expressions. They usually scowl or sort of slouch, or they look as they would like to hit you, or something of that sort. So one might say that they are examples of women alienated from their femininity taking on characteristics of men who are alienated from their masculinity. It is sort of pseudo-masculine behaviour by pseudo-women. But this does seem to have become a trend. At best, they are sulky and disagreeable-looking, and bitchy well, no, that's too positive; just very disagreeable. They look like gangsters' molls of the less attractive kind. Anyway, maybe we should pass on from that.

Prasannasiddhi: I was conjecturing during the discussion our group had on this subject that the current trends towards this sort of behaviour might possibly be due to the relative decrease in physical work that is current in Western society due to industrialization etc. Because I was stating that physical work actually connects a person more fundamentally with themselves ...

S.: But think, say, a couple of centuries ago how high a proportion of the population would have been agricultural labourers real D.H. Lawrence types, one might say, in a manner of speaking. That must have had some effect on people's psychology. Exactly what sort of effect, perhaps, we should not be in a hurry to conclude, but it must have had some effect. But perhaps just to maybe wind up this discussion a bit one has to recognize that there is quite a

wide range of sexual types among both men and women, and one has perhaps to distinguish between what one might call natural sexual types and those which are highly artificial, the product of quite special social and perhaps cultural, or even psychological, conditions. I think a lot of people have to be careful that they don't as it were react unfavourably to sexual types for which they feel, perhaps, a natural repulsion. I think everybody does have their own particular attractions and repulsions; I think you need to be aware of them and not to try to evaluate people strictly in terms of your particular attractions and repulsions.

Chairman: I don't think Danavira's question has been fully answered yet. He's got another [part].

Danavira: There is a second part, which I have not read out yet. So what extent does a man have to feel himself potent with regard to the society he lives in, and in the world at large, for maturity to develop in the full sense?

S.: I must say, in this connection, first, I have become a bit bored, let us say if I dare use that term with this expression 'potency'. I hear it so much; I read it in letters, in fact; people are concerned about their 'potency'. Women are often concerned about their potency which, again, being a bit old-fashioned, I perhaps find rather odd. Anyway, let's go through the question bit by bit.

Danavira: Shall I go through it again?

S.: Yes, just little by little.

Danavira: I'll keep ...

S.: This is quite an education for me!

[108]

Danavira: To what extent does a man have to feel himself as potent with regard to the society he lives in, and in the world at large, for maturity to develop in a full sense?

S.: I think perhaps it would be better to avoid using the word 'potency,' which has all sorts of, say, sexual overtones which perhaps constitute red herrings, let us say. I think one needs to feel adequate. I think one needs to feel able to cope with the society in which you live, the situation in which you find yourself. I think that is necessary to your self-esteem and self-confidence. Potency, which is usually used in the sexual context, also has similar implications within its particular sphere, but that is a comparatively narrow sphere. So I think perhaps we should speak in terms of a feeling of overall competence and adequacy to the situation in which you find yourself, whether the smaller one or the larger one. As I say, often people use that expression. For instance, people say things like: 'I'd like to feel more potent,' and they use it in a sort of general way. But you can't help feeling that there is a sort of sexual overtone or undertone there, which should not be there. Do you see what I mean as though they are carrying over from the sexual realm feelings which perhaps should be confined to that particular realm? Anyway, does that answer your question?

Danavira: ... beginning. 'Adequate' is adequate. It doesn't really, actually, in a way, but perhaps my question is clear enough to get my point across.

S.: It does seem that, with regard to both the questions, there perhaps was not a sufficient amount of thrashing out and clarification of terms beforehand, or a sufficient degree of ascertaining what actually one was talking about, and what actually one was asking. But in these sort of areas, usually, there is quite a bit of unclear thinking not necessarily yours personally.

Pavel: [If] one has a certain nature and tendency to any type of behaviour, effeminate or other, and suppresses it, so it may actually bind(?) a lot of energy and prevent that person becoming more and more oneself. Is that so?

S.: True. Yes, it is a general psychological principle. Yes, indeed. Of course, one must not therefore conclude that whatever you feel like doing, whatever particular mode of behaviour you feel like engaging in, you should be free to engage in it. You also have to see whether it is skilful or unskilful, from a Buddhist point of view whether with regard to yourself or with regard to other people: that you would like to behave in that particular way, by itself, is not sufficient as a reason for behaving in that particular way.

Chairman: The next question comes from Prasannasiddhi and it is on the term 'guru' in the text.

Prasannasiddhi: The term Guru has many romantic associations for Westerners. (1) Could you outline the use of the term in Tibet? (2) Did it have roughly the same connotations as the term 'teacher' has for us? (3) Does it refer to kalyana mitrata in a more general sense, i.e. with not so strong an emphasis on the verticality of the relationship as we tend to presume?

S.: Let's have those one by one.

Prasannasiddhi: Could you outline the use of the term in Tibet?

[109]

S.: 'Guru' is usually synonymous with lama. It means 'spiritual teacher'.

Prasannasiddhi: Did it have roughly the same connotations as the term 'teacher' has for us?

S.: No, it is 'spiritual teacher' rather than just 'teacher'; though in India, in the Indian languages nowadays, colloquially 'guru' does often mean just 'teacher'. At school, for instance, teachers are often addressed or referred to as 'guruji', but this is a modern, more colloquial, usage. In sacred literature, whether Buddhist or Hindu, 'guru' usually means 'teacher' in the specifically spiritual sense. Though there can be exceptions. For instance, someone who is learning the sitar will refer to his guru, that is, the person who is teaching him the sitar. But then you must not forget that in India music itself has a spiritual background.

Tape 10, Side 2

Prasannasiddhi: Does it refer to kalyana mitrata in a more general sense, i.e. with not so strong an emphasis on the verticality of the relationship as we tend to presume?

S.: I would say it was rather the other way around. Gampopa seems to use the word kalyana mitra, at least sometimes, in the sense of guru or spiritual teacher; and, yes, in later Indian

Buddhist literature, especially Vajrayana literature, kalyana mitra does mean guru in the sense of spiritual teacher. So one might say that, despite that famous passage in that chapter which we often quote, about the kalyana mitra in the sense of the ordinary friend, the emphasis seems to be on verticality rather than, let us say, horizontality.

Prasannasiddhi: Did the gurus always live up to this verticality, or was it a sort of projected verticality? Was it ... ?

S.: That is quite an interesting question, because one must say that, in Tibet itself, not all gurus by any means fulfilled the requirements of gurus. One might even say that disciples projected quite a lot on to them. Nonetheless, I think projection is not the whole story. It is not simply that disciples projected certain qualities on to their gurus which were not actually there, but that the guru was the sort of acknowledged symbol of something which he didn't merely represent, but to which he corresponded on a lower level, as it were. For instance, I think in this text itself, or certainly in Tibetan literature generally, you get the teaching that the guru is to be regarded as the Buddha himself; so the question arises, how do you take that? I think many Tibetan Buddhists, certainly well-informed ones, would be aware that, strictly speaking in the literal sense, their guru was not in fact Enlightened in the way that the Buddha was, but one must say they would not allow that to make any difference, because the guru becomes for them the symbol, or even the representative, of the Buddha, and therefore of the Enlightened state, and they are quite able to distinguish between what he does in his ordinary human capacity, let us say, and what he does or what he says in his capacity as guru or, so to speak, representative of the Buddha. Sometimes that sort of distinction is not understood often not understood, even, in Tibet and there is not only projection on the part of the disciple but rationalization on the part of the teacher, and one finds a lot of that in Tibetan Buddhist circles in the West. If, for instance, someone who professes to be a lama or professes to be a spiritual teacher is guilty of some particularly outrageous piece of behaviour, disciples will sometimes say: 'That is just his skilful means; he is just testing our faith.' You get that in India, too, with Hindu gurus. Perhaps they behave in an obviously unethical way, but then that is explained, or explained away, as 'They are testing the faith of the disciple.' Now I am not saying that the faith of the disciple cannot be tested, but [110] I am saying that all cases of alleged testing of faith of disciples are not, in fact, really cases of testing the faith of disciples. So one needs to exercise a great deal of discrimination here, and I am afraid, in some Buddhist circles in the West not only Tibetan Buddhist circles, others too that discrimination is not sufficiently exercised, and very tall, very high-sounding claims are made. All sorts of people nowadays are not only claiming that they are Enlightened but advertising themselves in Buddhist magazines and newspapers as Enlightened and as holding such-and-such course to which you are invited on payment of a certain fee, and so on. It really seems to me incredible that people should actually advertise themselves, or be advertised, as Enlightened. One advertisement I saw in an American paper was an advertisement for such-and-such guru, who had been certified as Enlightened by another guru I won't mention any names. It seemed an extraordinary state of affairs.

Prasannasiddhi: Do you think this dichotomy between the symbolic representation and what he actually is is a very healthy state of affairs?

S.: I am not so sure that it is healthy. I think that probably the only occasion on which it is perhaps appropriate, this sort of symbolic function, is in perhaps a strictly ritual or ceremonial context, but not outside that. And I am even doubtful about saying that. I think it is probably

much better to think in terms of a straightforwardly human relationship or communication, and in terms of acknowledging just what you actually find to be there. And, of course, what you may find sometimes is that there is something which you cannot grasp, or cannot quite understand. You have to acknowledge that too. You then acknowledge that the person is greater than you are, bigger than you are; how much greater, how much bigger, how can you say? If you as a non-Enlightened person want to label somebody else as Enlightened, to me that seems utterly presumptuous. So if you have disciples going around saying, 'My guru is this and my guru is that,' and 'My guru is Enlightened', or 'My guru is an incarnation of this, that or the other,' in a way it is really such presumption, because how can they possibly know?

Dhammarati: I can't remember the exact words, but you were talking about the most ... attitude towards one's spiritual friends, almost as if you were suggesting that you should not be too critical and not dwell on faults many of which you could defend, but rather concentrate on their qualities.

S.: That is true, but you should do that not only with your spiritual friends but with everybody that you possibly can. I said that partly because we do have, unfortunately, it seems, an inveterate tendency to look on the weaker side of people, the more negative side; so we need to counteract that, especially with regard to our spiritual friends, because how will we benefit from them unless we can see their more positive qualities and characteristics?

Dhammarati: Could I just ask ...spiritual fierce friendship and the idea of criticism ... ?

S.: Well, does one consider that fierce friendship is criticism? I would say this is as it were just off the cuff that fierce friendship involves the opening up within the friendship, within the communication, issues which are deeper and more far-reaching than the other person supposed. I think that is what fierce friendship really involves; not just criticism. That is a comparatively mild form of fierce friendship. Yes, you could point out to someone that they are not as mindful as they could be, or that they told a lie. I don't think that is fierce friendship. I think fierce friendship, rather, is when you point out the implications of something that somebody has said or done. It could be something positive, even, that they have done, not something negative. You point it out in such a way that they feel that a sort of abyss has opened up beneath their feet. [111] You point out the deeper implications of whatever situation it is that you are concerned with. You don't shrink from doing that. You are prepared to face up to those deeper implications, and you are requiring, you are demanding, that your friend faces up to them too. I think that is more of the nature of fierce friendship; not just having a good go at him on account of his weaknesses. No, I think that is a relatively superficial understanding of the matter.

Gerry: Bhante, returning to the guru-disciple relationship in the Tibetan tradition, could you say something about why there is such an emphasis on the disciple-guru relationship almost, it seems to me, at the expense of the relationship between disciple and disciple?

S.: Well, one mustn't forget the predominantly Vajrayanic colouring, let us say, of Tibetan Buddhism. The Vajrayana is concerned, among other things, with esoteric forms of spiritual practice, especially meditation, and the emphasis is on the learning of these orally from the teacher personally, not in any other way; so emphasis does come to be placed on the spiritual teacher an emphasis that you don't quite get, not quite in that way, in either the Hinayana or the Mahayana as such.

Gerry: Would you see that as a bad thing?

S.: Well, I don't think one can generalize simply in terms of good and bad. I think that sometimes it is a bad thing; that is, not that it is a bad thing in itself, but that that particular kind of tradition can be misunderstood and even exploited. I have certainly seen this happening myself. On the other hand, it can be a very good thing. I have seen very fine examples of people's devotion to their guru and of their guru's attitude towards them.

Barry: Going back to what you were saying about testing the disciple's faith. Are there valid circumstances in which the guru would test the disciple's faith, or would it just sort of happen ... ?

S.: Yes, some people have asked this before. I don't see that there is any need for anybody to test anybody, because life is testing you all the time. If you are observant, whether as a guru or anybody else, you can see people being tested. Life is such. I don't think you need to create artificial situations of testing. I won't rule that possibility out completely; perhaps, under exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary, but generally speaking I would say it is not necessary at all, because life is testing us all the time. The situations in which we find ourselves are testing us all the time. Our friends, spiritual and otherwise, are testing us all the time; our enemies are testing us all the time. So one just needs to observe how people react, how they respond in different situations. Sometimes I am quite amused when people come to see me at Padmaloka, because sometimes they come for lunch as well. But it is as though they think, sometimes, that I only actually see them during the half-hour or hour of the interview; that the rest of the time, maybe when we are eating together, I am just not seeing them at all that that is quite irrelevant! But, if anything, I am watching them much more keenly than at other times, because they don't realize that they are being observed. But I may say I observe people in that way all the time; not just when they sit down in front of me, in the context as it were of an official interview. So one has to remember this: yes, one is being tested all the time, by life, by everything. It is as though people think Bhante judges them by what he sees of them during that strictly limited period, but, no, if he judges them at all it is by what he sees of them all the time that he does actually see them. He may appear to be just thinking about something else, or just looking out of the window, but nonetheless he does still, I think, have his wits about him!

[112]

Chairman: Moving to a slightly different subject, Dharmadhara has a question on the Svabhavikakaya.

Dharmadhara: On p.8, n.2, there is a note about the Svabhavikakaya as the unity of the three kayas rather than a separate kaya. Could you say something about the background to the development of that teaching, and, secondly, if there is any relevance in it to us?

S.: I don't know that anything is known about the background to that teaching in a historical sense, but I think the reason why it developed is pretty obvious that, formerly, in the Mahayana, especially in the Yogacara school, the three kayas were spoken of the nirmanakaya, sambhogakaya, dharmakaya and there must have been a tendency for people to regard these as three separate kayas; and therefore the concept of svabhavikakaya was introduced to make it clear that they were in fact, so to speak, one; they were all kayas of the Buddha, they were different aspects of the Buddha, if you like. So the svabhavikakaya is a

symbol, in a way, one might say, of the unity of the three kayas.

gain, of course, perhaps people started regarding that itself as a fourth kaya, as it were holding together the previous three, which were still considered as being in a way distinct; but, no, it is not the fourth kaya; it is, in a sense, not a kaya at all, it is simply the unity of the three kayas. Perhaps it was not a very good idea to speak of a kaya at all, because then one had four kayas and one would need a fifth kaya to hold those four together, and thus it would go on. In fact, you have got mahasukhakaya later on, which in a way does that kind of thing. So let us just remember, then, that the three kayas are not really three kayas; there is only one Buddha, one Enlightened Being, and he can be looked at from different points of view, or he manifests on different levels, and he functions on those different levels in an appropriate manner and is perceived by beings living on that level in a way that corresponds to the kind of perception that they have on that level. Dharmadhara: Do you think it has any relevance to us?

S.: Only to the extent that we need a reminder, perhaps, of the unity of the three kayas, and of the fact that there are not literally three kayas at all.

: What place, then, does the mahasukhakaya have alongside the other four terms? Also

S.: This is a purely Vajrayanic concept. The Vajrayana developed at what stage it is difficult to say the concept of 'great bliss', mahasukha, in, so to speak, a specifically Tantric sense, as though it was a bliss that went beyond the bliss that you attained by the practice of the previous yantras or even of so to speak elementary Vajrayana; and that was considered as constituting another kaya, that is to say, a distinctive aspect of the Buddha's, let us say, in a manner of speaking, personality. There is also the term vajrakaya; also the term, in Tibetan I don't think it has a Sanskrit equivalent 'rainbow body'. But 'body' always means well, 'personality' isn't really appropriate; it really means what constitutes a person, what a person essentially is. Though, of course, in a sense, in Buddhist philosophy, nothing is essentially existent. But kaya expresses the deepest truth of a person, one might say. So, when we speak of the Buddha's dharmakaya, we are speaking of the fact that the Dharma constitutes the deepest truth of what we can only refer to as the Buddha's personality, inasmuch as he has become one with that Dharma his Dharma form, his Dharma body, as it were, or his dharmakayika. He has a dharmakaya, but it is not really that a Buddha has a dharmakaya, because you can't distinguish, really, a Buddha and his dharmakaya. The Buddha is his dharmakaya, because the Buddha is the Dharma; he has realized the Dharma. So, to [113] the extent that he has realized the Dharma, he embodies the Dharma, and that the fact that the Buddha embodies the Dharma makes it possible to speak of his dharmakaya. Not that he has the Dharma as a kaya; the two really coincide.

: Does the Tibetan term 'rainbow body' or 'Buddha's rainbow body' tie up is it synonymous with sambhogakaya?

S.: Yes and no. One might say it is a distinctively Vajrayanic type of sambhogakaya. Anyway, perhaps we don't need to bother about rainbow bodies just yet!

Chairman: OK; so, not bothering about rainbow bodies, we've got a question on the sambhogakaya from Kevin.

Kevin: Bhante, in the chapter on 'The Meeting of Spiritual Friends', Gampopa gives four

categories of spiritual friends that one can meet. The fourth category refers to sambhogakaya of the Buddha. How does one see the sambhogakaya of the Buddha as spiritual friend, and how can one distinguish between this and a vision from the collective unconscious?

S.: The traditional Buddhist view is that one ascends, so to speak, to the level on which the sambhogakaya exists or operates through meditation; especially meditation on the forms, let us say, of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Not that if one has a vision of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, that is necessarily a revelation to you of an aspect of the sambhogakaya; one has to introduce a distinction here, a Vajrayanic distinction, between samayasattva and jnanasattva. The vision that you see is, so to speak, a conditioned thing initially, formed in accordance with what you have seen say, of thangkas of a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva. That is called the samayasattva. But with the samayasattva as a base or starting point, you gain access to what is called the jnanasattva, which is the counterpart of that samayasattva on a genuinely Transcendental level, and that does constitute, so to speak, a revelation of a particular aspect of the sambhogakaya. So how to distinguish that experience, or even the experience of the samayasattva, from something coming from the unconscious or from the collective unconscious? That introduces a quite different term. One might say that even these experiences are in the collective unconscious; it depends how you define the collective unconscious. But if one is thinking of or defining the collective unconscious in a way that stops short of the sort of possibilities that I have mentioned, so that there is nothing Transcendental, at least, in the collective unconscious, then one will be able to differentiate between the two say, a vision which is a genuine spiritual revelation and a vision that comes from the collective unconscious, simply by its consequences; because an experience of the jnanasattva, let us say, will be a vipassana-type experience, in a manner of speaking. It will have a transforming effect on character, if sufficiently deep, in a way that a vision that is the product of the collective unconscious might not have. Nonetheless, one must be careful about the use of terms. The term 'collective unconscious' is used very loosely. It can be used in the sense of that which contains whatever comes from beyond the individual conscious mind; in that way, it could be used to include all the levels I have mentioned.

Murray: You distinguish between the collective unconscious and the samayasattva. Am I to understand from this that there are elements of the Transcendental in the samayasattva?

S.: No, I didn't distinguish between the collective unconscious and the samayasattva. I ended by saying that the term 'the collective unconscious' can be used in a very broad sense to cover that which contains anything coming from beyond the limits of the conscious mind. So if you define 'collective unconscious' in that way, the samayasattva type of experience comes from the collective unconscious, the [114] jnanasattva type of experience comes from the collective unconscious. But often, again, the collective unconscious is not defined in that way. Its contents very definitely do not contain anything spiritual or, at least, not of a Transcendental nature. So whether one regarded the samayasattva experience as coming from the depths of the collective unconscious or not would depend on how one defined that collective unconscious. It is such an ambiguous or ambivalent term.

Murray: Putting aside the issue of the collective unconscious, then, does the samayasattva have aspects of the Transcendental, and is the experience of the sambhogakaya wholly Transcendental in nature?

S.: What does one mean by the samayasattva having aspects of the Transcendental? I used the

term 'correspondence'; I spoke of the samayasattva as corresponding to the jnanasattva. That is to say, if, for instance, you take the figure of Avalokitesvara, you, say, visualize him in a particular way which you have learned by reading texts, by looking at thangkas, so you have quite a clear and vivid realization of that form in that way, say, in meditation. That is an experience of the samayasattva. But, then, with that as your basis, you have another experience which corresponds to the first one, which is called the jnanasattva; but, though it corresponds, it isn't that it even has a form, in the ordinary sense. One can only say that it corresponds at a higher level to what at a lower level you have experienced as the samayasattva.

Murray: So the jnanasattva is that synonymous with the sambhogakaya?

S.: The sambhogakaya pertains to the Buddha; jnanasattva is a term that pertains to, so to speak, an individual Bodhisattva. But, of course, a sambhogakaya Buddha is surrounded by Bodhisattvas; those Bodhisattvas can be regarded as specific aspects of the Buddha, of his sambhogakaya. So, in that sense, one can say that a jnanasattva, which is transcendental, is a particular aspect of the sambhogakaya, which also is transcendental.

Murray: So we are talking about shades, again.

S.: We are talking about facets.

Murray: And that would include even the samayasattva it is a sort of lower facet, then, of

S.: Yes, you can say the samayasattva is a reflection of the jnanasattva in a lower medium. But the samayasattva as such is not an aspect or part of the sambhogakaya as such.

Prasannasiddhi: So, if the samayasattva as such is not an aspect of the sambhogakaya as such, what would it be an aspect of?

S.: Well, it is a mental construction. It is a subtle mental construction that you have built up, as I said, from what you have understood about a particular Bodhisattva his qualities, attributes and so on that you have picked up from literature, looking at thangkas, and so on. But it is not that that is altogether dissociated from the higher level say, from the jnanasattva level because, after all, how did that samayasattva form originate? It was an attempt on the part of someone who had experienced the jnanasattva to express, on a lower level in terms of form, colour and so on, what it was that he had experienced.

Chairman: We come on to a series of questions now to do with kalyana mitrata.

S.: How many questions have we got through, and how many have we finished?

[115]

Chairman: We have got through five questions, and we have got 15 left.

S.: All right.

Chairman: We will have to hold some of these over till tomorrow night. The first of these questions comes from Bram.

Bram: It is a question on effective, provisional, real. In our study on spiritual friendship, we tried to extrapolate your classification of the levels of Going for Refuge to the levels of spiritual friendship. According to such an extrapolation, there would be cultural, provisional, effective, real and absolute spiritual friendship. Reflecting on this, we were thinking that the level of friendship between two spiritual friends would be determined by the lowest common level of Going for Refuge between the two friends: for example, the spiritual friendship between you and the average Order Member would be an effective spiritual friendship, and the spiritual friendship between two Stream Entrants would be a real spiritual friendship. Would you like to comment on this?

S.: I think one can set up that particular set of correspondences. I must say I had not thought of this myself obviously, one can't think of everything! But, yes, it is quite interesting to try to draw up these sort of sets of correspondences. As far as I can see, this is quite a valid one. It needs filling out, of course, because one doesn't draw up a set of correspondences just for the sake of drawing it up, but for the sake of what light one set of terms can throw on another, to which it is related in that way. So one can start thinking: what does cultural friendship mean? What does provisional spiritual friendship mean? What does effective spiritual friendship mean? What does real spiritual friendship mean, what does it actually involve? What are its characteristics? How is one to develop it? Yes, I would say it is quite a useful set of correspondences. Maybe someone should try and give a talk on those five levels of spiritual friendship. Though, again, could one speak of spiritual friendship with regard to the first? One would have perhaps to consider that question whether one could have a spiritual friendship which was simply a cultural friendship or, as I have also expressed it, an ethnic friendship. One would need to look into that, perhaps.

Bram: Could one speak of a spiritual friendship with regard to somebody who was, say, not a Stream Entrant, who has a friend who is not even on the spiritual Path in what way could you describe that friendship?

S.: One would have to introduce, no doubt, the term 'vertical' and the term 'horizontal'. You could raise the question: to what extent is a spiritual friendship that is vertical a spiritual friendship? That raises the question: what is friendship? You have just to define your terms. You can define them as you please, up to a point. Was that the whole question?

Chairman: That leads us quite neatly on to the next question, which is from Ray on horizontal and vertical friendship.

Ray: This chapter appears to put the emphasis on vertical spiritual friendship with no reference to horizontal spiritual friendship.

S.: Except in the case of the famous reference.

Ray: Does this imply that spiritual friendship is essentially vertical?

[116]

S.: (pause) I think probably one can say that spiritual friendship is most usefully vertical; that is to say, especially for the junior partner in the friendship, let us say, because it then becomes a very effective means of personal development for him if he is in a relation of spiritual friendship with someone who is definitely more advanced than himself, so that it is a vertical

relationship. This is not to underestimate the importance and value of the horizontal spiritual friendship, but I think it might be questioned whether horizontal spiritual friendships are enough. Of course, you could also question whether vertical spiritual friendships are enough. It does really seem that most people really do need both. So one might even say that spiritual friendship, in its totality, is both; therefore you might even say that, for a perfect spiritual friendship, you need at least three people. Unless, of course, one of them is very versatile indeed! But I think I stick to my previous statement that, yes, it would seem that, for a perfect spiritual friendship, you need at least three people.

Dhammarati: Is the FWBO's emphasis on horizontal spiritual friendship your innovation or are there traditional precedents for it?

S.: In a sense, yes, in a sense, no. I think I have made it more explicit than it is usually made in Eastern Buddhist circles, but nonetheless I was struck, when I was in the East and in contact especially with monks I think I have mentioned this before by the amount of, yes, horizontal spiritual friendship there was among them. There was often a very good feeling among them. Perhaps it was a bit diluted there was not much fierce spiritual friendship but there was quite a lot of horizontal spiritual friendship. But nothing was made of it, it was taken for granted. I think perhaps in the West, within the FWBO, we have to emphasize it and speak of it and give it a definite label, as it were, just because the thing itself is perhaps a comparative novelty.

Dhammarati: It's not just an expedient on your part because most of the people around have a vertical relationship?

S.: No, I wouldn't say that, because after all we have Gampopa's statement: again, the well-known reference. Also, there is the point I have made before, that in the case of people who are not Stream Entrants, though your overall relationship is one, say, among yourselves of horizontal spiritual friendship, you do have your ups and downs. So, from time to time, in a particular situation or a particular context, it may become, at least for a while, relatively vertical.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, if we are going to need three people, I was just thinking that if one person was in touch with the sambhogakaya, with the Buddha, in a sense you could perhaps say you only needed two people.

S.: But if you say 'you' only needed two people or did you mean 'only two people are needed'?

Prasannasiddhi: Only two people are needed. Or would you include ...

S.: Ah, if one of them No, I think what I meant was that each individual person, to evolve, needs someone who is more highly developed than himself and another person who is more or less on the same level. For instance, there might be things that you prefer to talk about or the sort of companionship you get with someone on the same level that you don't get with someone who is on a higher level. So, even if you have, say, a spiritual friendship with, let us say, an aspect of the sambhogakaya, you still need a spiritual friendship with someone who is more or less on your own level, and not an aspect of the sambhogakaya assuming that is your particular level. But I must say I hadn't thought of that before. It does [117] open up all sorts of intriguing possibilities, doesn't it? Anyway, we won't go into those at the moment.

: Would you not say that four were needed? yourself, the person you look up to, the peer with whom you develop, and somebody whom you bring on? ...

S.: Yes, you could say that, too. In that case, there would be four people in total spiritual friendship; yes, four people. From your point of view. Yes, if you look at the spiritual friendship as though it were an entity by itself, at least three would be sufficient, but if you are thinking in terms of fulfilling all your own individual requirements, well, yes, you need someone to whom you can relate vertically up, someone to whom you can relate vertically down, someone to whom you can relate horizontally on the same level; so that is you plus three others. That would give you all four possible relations of spiritual friendship.

: All three possible relations.

S.: Yes, all three relations, but four people being involved.

Chairman: I think Barry was next.

Barry: Yes, but that has been answered.

Vessantara: What of the level of Stream Entry, Bhante, supposing you just had two Stream Entrants, perhaps on the same level? Would that be sufficient, [so that] they would just encourage one another?

S.: I suppose Stream Entrants don't really need much encouragement, do they? But it is nice to go along together, like Sariputta and Moggallana did.

Vessantara: Does that mean that they don't need a vertical spiritual friendship?

S.: Well, Sariputta and Moggallana had the Buddha. But perhaps Stream Entrants don't need it in the same way or to the same degree, because they cannot fall back. I think one of the principal functions of the kalyana mitra, in the vertical relationship, is just to prevent you falling back, or if you do fall back to help you pick yourself up and carry on again. So perhaps in a sense the vertical spiritual friendship isn't quite so important for those who have gained Stream Entry as it is for those who have not.

: So you can't at least three relationships are necessary for spiritual development ... with reference to the level ... Stream Entry primarily?

S.: Yes, but if, of course, one of your spiritual friends includes a Stream Entrant, of course you are quite sure that you can always rely upon him for a vertical spiritual friendship; otherwise there is always the possibility that he might fall back to a level below where you are, which would be rather disconcerting.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, I was just wondering how you fared in this system. Do you have horizontal spiritual friends? Do you have vertical spiritual friends?

S.: I would like to think I do, but I doubt very much whether I am in actual physical contact with any of them. But perhaps that isn't necessary. I must say I

Tape 10, Side 2

must say I have found over the years that physical contact with people whom at least I used to regard as in a relationship of vertical spiritual friendship to me is less and less necessary, and many of them, of course, have died anyway I say [118] many, but let us say four or five out of, say, five or six or seven. But, yes, I think I can say that physical separation means less and less.

Prasannasiddhi: Less and less spiritual friendship?

S.: No, physical separation is less and less important..

Prasannasiddhi: Ah, I see. So do you actually contact them on a mental level, or is it ... or ?

S.: No, one can't speak of contact on a mental level, because it isn't the mental level. It is quite difficult to explain; it is more that they are simply there. [Rest of session missing.]

[119]

[Tape 11 is a duplicate of Tape 10.]

Tape 12, Side 1

Chairman: ... chapter on 'Meeting Spiritual Friends'. We have not come up with a great many questions at all; in fact, there are only 8. Some groups had not quite covered the whole of the last section of the text. There seemed to be quite a good discussion on the ... aspect of the relationship between the guru and the disciple, but not many questions have come out of it. We will start and see where it takes us. The first question comes from ...

: In your lecture on 'Fidelity', you say that if one does not have some continuous relationships, one will be unable to grow as an individual. Could you say why this is, and how important a place you think such relationships should have in deciding what you do, for instance at a Centre, coop and so on?

S.: I think continuity is an important aspect or part of the whole spiritual life in fact, of human life itself. We know that, in the case of spiritual practice, say, in meditation, continuity is important. You don't get very far if you don't stick to the same practice or practices over a considerable period of time. It is the same with human relationships: it is very difficult to go very far with anybody very quickly. The relationship, the friendship, needs to be built up. So supposing you break off friendship with one person and you start up with another, you don't start off with the second person from the same point at which you broke off with the first person. You have to start all over again, perhaps; you have to go back to the beginning, back to square one. So if you do this very often you don't go very far; and, because you can't get very deep in your relationship because you can't go very deeply in your relationship, you yourself don't get the opportunity to grow and develop. So continuity is really essential, especially, perhaps, in the more critical stages of your life or of your development. We know that, in the case of children, for instance, if there is a break in their relationship with those who are close to them, they do usually suffer, and we may even suffer at later periods, too. So, yes, continuity is important continuity of relationships in general, continuity of friendships. And I think if you are considering your future, as perhaps a young, newly

ordained Order Member, you have to take that factor very seriously into consideration. If you do have relationships, [if] you do have spiritual friendships especially, dating back to the period before your ordination, it is very good if you can continue those. On the other hand, one can also say that, once you are established as a young Order Member, inasmuch as you are young and inasmuch as there are lots of other Order Members and Mitras in other parts of the country and other parts of the world, there is no reason why you, being young, should not start up fresh friendships, fresh spiritual friendships, which probably will last you all through your life; because it is the spiritual friendships that are important and perhaps, once one does find oneself ordained, one also finds that most of your long-standing friendships say, those outside the Movement are not spiritual friendships and are not very likely to stay with you. But if you can carry over a few spiritual friendships, at least for a few years, so much the better. So, yes, this particular factor needs to be given some consideration. It is quite an important factor: how important, it is difficult to say; just as it is difficult to say how important are the other factors against which one may have to weigh it. Only the individual concerned himself can know exactly how much weight really needs to be given to each factor.

[120]

Chairman: The next question comes from Tejamitra.

Tejamitra: I was just going to [follow up] that question, actually. Why, specifically, if you can't go deep with a friendship, does that keep you from development?

S.: Well, this involves two things: the nature of development itself, and the nature of the part played by your communication with other people. I think we all know, I think we all agree, it is not easy to develop on one's own. One develops much more quickly and much more deeply in communication, in contact, with other people. But the communication, the contact, can't go very deep and can't be very satisfactory, and therefore can't contribute very radically to your spiritual development, until mutual confidence has been established, until there is a real spiritual friendship. And that takes time to build up. You may need someone who knows you very well and sees you very clearly, and who can point out to you things that you can't see for yourself; but that can't happen all at once, because (1) that person needs time to get to know you sufficiently well, and (2) you need time to develop sufficient trust in him so that when he does tell you something you really know it is for your own good and that you can rely upon what he has to say.

: On p.39, in note 25 at the end of the chapter, it explains that according to the third simile, of being like a pot filled with poison, if your mind is affected by the five poisons, the Dharma can actually be harmful to you. Also, I looked up in the Majjhima Nikaya the parable of the snake, where the Buddha says that if the Dharma is grasped wrongly it is like grasping a snake wrongly, which turns round and bites you and leads to your death. Could you explain why this is?

S.: I think to understand why it is you have to look at concrete examples. For instance, one can take an example which I sometimes do take that of the Far Eastern Buddhist teaching, in a sense, the Mahayana teaching that 'You are Buddha'. Obviously, this can be grasped wrongly; it can be grasped, so to speak, by the ego. (I think I mentioned this a few evenings ago.) So, if you proceed on the basis that you are the Buddha, and that therefore, being the Buddha, you don't really need to practise [because] it is all there already, clearly that is going to be bad for you; the Dharma itself will work against you or what you understand as the

Dharma, what you interpret, or misinterpret, as the Dharma, will work against you. Similarly with some forms of the so-called vipassana meditation: vipassana or Insight, understood wrongly, can lead to the development of an alienated awareness. So, in this way, your own perverted, in a sense almost poisonous, mental attitude, will prevent the Dharma from having on you the beneficial effect that it was meant to have. We can probably think of all sorts of other examples.

: What I was specifically thinking was that, from the point of view of getting a wrong understanding of the Dharma that's fairly easy to see so from the point of view of the poisons he mentions in the text you could say that was basically a form of ignorance. But what about if your state of mind is one of hatred? How would that come back on [you] when you start practising the Dharma?

S.: One can only try to think of concrete examples. You might, in this angry or hateful state of mind, be listening to a talk, and the speaker might be speaking about, let us say, the imperfection of the world, even the shortcomings of people, so you eagerly seize on just that particular aspect, the shortcomings of people; it confirms your judgement of people, it confirms you in your hating attitude towards people, which was not the intention of the speaker at all. Do you see what I mean? You assimilate everything to your own mental state, your own mode of being, even, [121] and ignore everything else. Your mental state causes you to give a one-sided interpretation, or to pay one-sided attention, to everything that you hear, everything that you read. Dhammarati: In the examples that you gave, would this become a problem where there wasn't close contact with a teacher with some feel for the nature of the experience? I am thinking of ... misinterpret the idea that you could become Buddha. It would imply that the teacher didn't understand how they were taking the teaching.

S.: Well, of course, unfortunately, the position often is nowadays that you are not in contact with a teacher, a living teacher, at all. You just read books, and you read these sort of statements in books; and, in a sense, you cannot help misunderstanding them, you cannot help appropriating them in an egoistic manner. But it does sometimes seem that even teachers teachers especially coming from the East don't really understand what is happening, they don't understand the effect of their teaching on the people that they are teaching. Perhaps, in some ways, they don't even understand what it is that they are teaching not really. It is not always easy to understand what sort of effect your teaching is having on the people that you are teaching. This is why you need to be in close contact with them, you need to check up on them constantly, make sure that they really have understood, make sure that they haven't misinterpreted, make sure that they are not practising wrongly.

Dhammarati: I just wondered if you could think of examples in your teaching where you [said] something and then had as it were to correct it later?

S.: I can't think of any example offhand, but I know there are many such. Perhaps some of you can think of some of them. There have been quite a number of such in the past. Sometimes it almost has seemed as though people were waiting for me just to say something which they could then seize on out of context and then use to justify a certain opinion or attitude that they already had.

Vessantara: I think that aphorism, 'Our commitment is primary, lifestyle is secondary', did actually ... That seems a good example.

S.: Yes, right, yes. That reminds me of another little saying I have referred to it, and to the misunderstanding, I think, fairly recently. Towards the end of my stay in Cornwall, I met certain Order Members, just a handful of them, in the New Forest; we had a little get-together for a couple of days. I forget how the question arose, but I think somebody asked me whether there was anything I am not sure whether they asked, in my teaching or in the FWBO, that could be dispensed with; I forget exactly how it was phrased. But I said something to the effect that everything could be dispensed with except the Going for Refuge. Now my intention was not to say that other things were not important; my intention was simply to emphasize the supreme or overriding importance of the Going for Refuge, but I suspect that was understood subsequently by some people to mean that you could disregard everything, forget about everything else, nothing else mattered; all that mattered was the Going for Refuge. But that is, in a way, to misunderstand the Going for Refuge itself, because you can't Go for Refuge in a vacuum. You can only Go for Refuge on the basis of a certain support, with a certain amount of preparation and so on. So perhaps that was an example of that kind of thing. And, yes, as Vessantara said, when I said that commitment was primary and lifestyle secondary, I did not mean that lifestyle was unimportant; I meant that it was an expression, and its importance was the importance of an expression, whereas it was the commitment, the Going for Refuge, which was the Primary thing, the essential thing. [122] Can anybody think of any other example? perhaps one that you have been guilty of yourselves and had to correct subsequently?

Lalitaratna: One that I have come up against, Bhante, is people I have worked with in cooperatives have quoted you as saying one should spend as little time on one's life [?work] as possible! (Bhante chuckles.) ... coop situation.

S.: Well, yes, that is taking the saying right out of context, because I said that originally when people were working outside in the world and before coops came into existence; so, clearly, that statement has quite a different significance in the context of working in a coop. Perhaps, there, it should be that one should spend as much time as possible working!

Vessantara: I think your aphorism about 'the object of meditation is to transform yourself, not to have good meditations' !

S.: Was that taken to mean that one should not have good meditations, or that bad meditations are good for you?

Vessantara: Almost that you could expect, if your meditations were bad, you didn't really have to look at it too closely, just set up an expectation that you shouldn't expect your meditation to be very good. But, presumably, if you were really transforming yourself, you would have good meditations.

S.: Yes, that you shouldn't make good meditations your aim and object, and be disappointed or depressed when you didn't have them; that was not the primary thing, that was a by-product, as it were. It makes one wonder why people do misunderstand in this sort of way. Perhaps that is too big a question to go into now.

Chairman: We've got a few more examples, it seems, Bhante.

: I hear you have been discouraging lately the use of the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine'. I

was wondering why that was.

S.: Well, I would have thought that was pretty obvious! I used them myself, originally, in that lecture in the Bodhisattva series what was that called?

: 'Masculinity and Femininity in aspects '

S.: It was in connection with virya and ksanti, and I was careful to put the terms 'masculinity' and 'femininity' within single inverted commas, but those single inverted commas were very quickly removed! and I think that gave rise to the misunderstanding; people started taking these terms, using these terms, in a very literal way. So, yes, I have myself tried to avoid using these terms, even, recently.

Prasannasiddhi: I believe, in connection with your lecture on 'Fidelity', that some people misinterpreted this to mean that you should be faithful to your girl friend.

S.: Oh, yes! The bit of feedback I got was that someone had said, after attending this lecture perhaps he had gone back to his community 'Bhante says that relationships are OK!' Which, again, was not my intention. But perhaps that was an example of hearing what you want to hear. So I think, first of all, one has to listen very carefully, or read very carefully, then examine the context, and then try to relate what has been said to very general principles, and to guard against any subjective interpretation on one's own part.

[123]

Danavira: One example that came to mind is of 'objective truth' and the nuclear war...

S.: Yes, that was an extraordinary one; because I got letters from very intelligent people, apparently, who totally failed to understand what I meant by 'objective truth'. I think it was mainly in the case of one person in particular, the editor of a magazine who wanted to review the booklet, and in fact reviewed it quite favourably he was looking for something very abstruse and profound in that phrase, whereas actually I just meant it to be understood in a quite plain, direct, straightforward manner. It was not intended as a profound philosophical statement, but just as a sort of commonsense statement.

Pavel: Bhante, it seems it is unavoidable for beginners not to be subjective, not to try to ... to one's own views. Can you summarize the most effective methods to get out of one's subjectivity as quickly as possible?

S.: Well, there are contributing factors. Perhaps one should not read too much! I mean I do encourage people to read; I encourage, more particularly, Order Members to read, but in the case of the beginner I think they are much better off reading Wordsworth or reading Shelley than they are perhaps reading Guenther or oh, please don't take this too literally, of course! (laughter). But I think in the case of the Buddhist works you read, as a beginner, you should read reliable works, works which are reasonably within your grasp, and works which you return to again and again and into which you go more and more deeply, not spread yourself around too much. That can only lead to confusion, unless you are a quite exceptional person. I even hesitate to say that, because everybody likes to think he is an exceptional person. And being in close contact, if you can, with spiritual friends, if you are a beginner, a newcomer; try to have contact with more experienced Mitras and Order Members, and discuss things

with them and make sure that you have understood correctly; ask questions with a view to clarifying what you have understood or making quite sure that you have understood correctly. Don't assume that one has understood; I think that is the cause of a lot of our difficulties, don't assume that you have understood; assume that you probably haven't understood, at least not fully and clearly, and that you need to check up on your own understanding. Don't assume that because you understand the words you have understood the meaning.

Pavel: It is a question of trust; you have to trust, really, the person you check with. Sometimes you may believe that the other person is subjective, too.

S.: Well, even that isn't bad, if his subjectivity is opposed to yours, because at least you are brought up against the fact that there is a different way of looking at things. But it is, of course, better that you try to clarify your understanding with someone with a real grasp of the subject. Perhaps, in this connection, you should beware of charisma; beware of the charismatic person. Sometimes, just because he is charismatic, a person can give you the impression that you have understood when you have not understood. You are much safer, in a way, with some more plodding person who will take real pains to make sure that you have in fact understood.

Dhammarati: ...while we are on the subject, ... what you said ... in the seminar. I think it was: 'If you detect any signs of charisma in yourself, I suggest you eradicate it immediately.' And I wondered what you meant by charisma?

S.: Charisma is a word which isn't, perhaps, easy to define, but we all know that some people are more attractive than others as persons. They attract us and they fascinate us, and we are more inclined to follow them. I sometimes think that, in many cases, this charisma is a sort of sublimated, or sometimes not so sublimated, sex appeal. I think I slightly upset, or perhaps disturbed, one particular Order [124] Member by suggesting that this might be the case! Just to give you an example from history: there was the case I don't remember all the details in the history of Athens of that famous person who is one of the participants in the Symposium do you know who I am thinking of?

Voices: Alcibiades.

S.: Alcibiades! He was a very charismatic person. He could always get the Athenians to do what he wanted them to do, even though it was against their own interests, and someone said it was largely because he was the tallest and handsomest of the Greeks. This, of course, is carrying one's somewhat sexual proclivities rather too far! But it may not have been just a straightforward case of his tallness and good looks, but he was a good speaker, he was very convincing, and he had great charm and he could really sway the gathering of the citizens. But his policy was disastrous for Athens, and he eventually died in exile, didn't he? In fact, he became a traitor to Athens. So he was a famous example, and there are others in modern times. You could say that, in many ways, Hitler was a charismatic person. There are other examples, too. One could say that certain famous entertainers, certain pop stars, are charismatic personalities; they manage to exercise a certain charm, they have a certain appeal, so they can get you to follow them, to agree with them, accept what they say, regardless of what it is that they actually say. On account of their charm, on account of their charisma, they can slip something across that, if that charisma had not been there, you would not have allowed to pass. So you get the idea of the sort of thing I am talking of? It has got quite a lot

to do with charm, personal attractiveness. Though sometimes people have charisma who are not necessarily good-looking in the conventional way. But charisma is quite a dangerous thing, because on account of someone's charisma you don't scrutinize the actual truth of what he is saying. So supposing you ask a question, and this charismatic person answers, you are so pleased with his reply that is, so pleased with him that you think he has answered you. You think he has clarified the matter for you. But, no, he has just left you in a dazed state a state of happy stupor. He has overwhelmed you with his charm or his charisma. You haven't really emerged with any clearer understanding. So I think if one detects oneself doing this and after all, as an Order Member, with your kesa round your neck, you are in a position sometimes to impress the impressionable beginner or newcomer, and you can take advantage, even unconsciously, of the fact that he is impressed by you, that he is inclined to accept rather than reject what you say, and can be very carried away by, perhaps, the very things that he is projecting on to you. Perhaps he is projecting on to you things that are not really there authority, great wisdom and understanding, etc. So you yourself have to protect him against that. Far from exploiting it, exploiting your own charisma if you have any luckily there are not many people in the Order who have charisma; it hasn't been encouraged, as you can gather if you do detect in yourself signs of charisma, just nip it in the bud. Be very careful you don't use it or exploit it, because if you exploit your charisma you will be exploiting other people.

Dhammarati: There is an instance that you gave about the ... Sutta, where ... a very good-looking monk and an Enlightened hunchback ... you get the Dharma across ...

S.: I think charm and a pleasant manner are not quite the same thing as charisma. Charisma amounts to rather more than that. Yes, you should be charming, yes, you [125] should be pleasing, yes, you should be agreeable. But charismatic? That's something different.

Murray: It seems to me what you are suggesting is that the difference between the two [is that] there is something inherently two-sided, or there is a lack of integrity, in charisma; whereas if you are using just good manners, attractive manners,

S.: Yes, I think there is a lack of integrity in the use or exploitation of charisma. I am not quite sure of this, but I think, in the case of some people, they can't help being charismatic by nature, by temperament. But if there are any such people, if they do find that they are genuinely, so to speak, charismatic, in the sense that they do quite easily unconsciously attract people and impress people, they just have to make sure that they keep that well under control, and that they don't exploit it and therefore don't exploit people. If you are good-looking, you can't help it; if you are charming, you can't help it; if people fall for you, you can't help it. But what you can help is that you don't deliberately exploit that side of yourself and therefore exploit other people.

Murray: So charisma, in a way, is getting away from the practice of the Precepts, then? if you start to exploit... you practise the Precepts

S.: But it is more than that. If you indulge in your own charisma, you are getting away from all sorts of things. In a way you are just role-playing, you are getting away from your own basic integrity; you must, therefore, get away from the Dharma. You may be observing all the Precepts, technically, but you can still be on the wrong path if you exploit your own charisma.

: Bhante, I can't think of an example, but do women display charisma, exhibit charisma?

S.: Women this is quite a difficult question, because one might say that women don't so much display it as are susceptible to it. I hate to generalize, but I can't think of many charismatic women, even in history; but women do seem susceptible to charisma, which means, I suppose, charisma in men. So be particularly careful, if you are an Order Member and have around you a circle of admiring women devotees!

Mark: You mentioned the impressionable beginner who might project things like charisma on to an Order Member, say. How do you cope with that projection? [How do you] get rid of it as soon as possible? ...

S.: I think this is one of the functions of spiritual friendship. After all, every Order Member I hope will belong to a chapter, will be working, say, in a Centre with other Order Members. If he does not realize what is going on, I am pretty sure it will be obvious to at least some other people, some other Order Members, and if they realize that he does not understand what is happening, they should point it out to him and if necessary the matter should be discussed at a chapter meeting. Let people be, in the genuine sense, impressive because of their practice; let them inspire people, by all means. But swaying people through their personal charisma is quite another matter.

Mark: If the Order Member is aware that beginners are projecting things like charisma on to him, how does he behave towards that beginner? How does he help that beginner to recall that projection?

[126]

S.: I don't think there is much you can do straight away. I think if that has happened, the chances are that the two of you will have been in contact for some time. You just have to make sure that you are just being yourself in every situation, you are not playing up to that other person's projections. I don't think there is anything you can do, very directly, on the spot, to undo the projection; perhaps it has to work itself out in a natural way. But just make sure you are being yourself, you are behaving genuinely, and you are not, even unconsciously, laying up to that projection. It is sometimes quite difficult to do this, but anyway it is something that you must discover from your own experience and work it out as best you can.

Kevin: Does the same projection operate in, say, a guru-disciple or teacher-disciple relationship, or is it of a different order?

S.: What exactly are you thinking of?

Kevin: I am just thinking of when we look at someone who is charismatic, and they have certain qualities that we would like to develop ourselves, then we project our own attention on to them. Does that same thing happen with the teacher-disciple, does the same sort of projection occur?

S.: One can, of course, have charismatic disciples. I think one has come across examples where it is not so much the teacher or the guru but, let us say, the senior, the older Order Member maybe who has got a bit dull and a bit uninspired over the years; he sees some bright, good-looking Mitra or perhaps he is not a Mitra yet coming along, and he perhaps

starts projecting a bit on to him, and seeing more in him than, originally, is actually there, and makes a lot of him, and then possibly later on even becomes disappointed. One has seen this sort of thing happening. I think chairmen have to be rather careful of this, because if you are not careful you will neglect the more solid person, the less superficially attractive person. You will go, if not actually for the good-looking, well-spoken person but the more intelligent person, the brighter at least superficially brighter person, who is more fun to be with or to go out for a walk with. You have to be quite careful of this, especially when you become a chairman. Of course, yes, there are some people who are brighter than others, objectively, and you may decide quite objectively that it is better to spend your time and devote your energy to the brighter person. That is quite a different thing.

: Just to carry on our train of thought, this seems to be quite an issue in itself not even for Chairmen but just as an Order Member working around the Centre I am thinking of how actually do you divide your time? because obviously you can't spend all your time on the bright people, certain people [are] quite slow, need a lot of time and attention, but at the same time it seems that you do need to encourage the strong people, given a ... situation. Have you got any ideas on that?

S.: I think it is very difficult to generalize. I have said I think it is an aphorism in Peace is a Fire that it is the strong that need the help rather than the weak. I have amplified that, I think, sometimes, by saying that if there is an epidemic you need to train up doctors; so that might mean that, if you are a doctor spending your time training up doctors, you have less time, for the time being, for the patients; but in the long run it is to the good of the patients that you should be spending your time training up doctors. I think you have to look at it in that way. But exactly how you do that, exactly how you apply that principle, will differ, no doubt, from Centre to Centre, perhaps from one country to another. I think it is only the person who is actually in the situation who can make an informed decision.

[127]

Chairman: The next question comes from Prasannasiddhi.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, this is not quite related to the text, but we didn't have any questions in our group today, so ... ! During the course of my reading, I came across the five Dhyani Bodhisattvas, these being Vajrapani, Ratnapani, Avalokitesvara, Visvapani and Samantabhadra. They seem to be a quite significant group. Is there any reason why you haven't included them among the material you have presented to the FWBO, and have you any comments on them?

S.: I don't think I have presented them or mentioned them, but there is no particular reason for that. There is no particular reason why they should not come, or be brought, into the picture. I think sometimes perhaps I have been concerned not to bring in too many unfamiliar names. But, as people do become more and more familiar with the names of different Buddhas, especially the Five Buddhas, and different Bodhisattvas, there is no reason why these five names should not be brought in and become quite well known. The five human Buddhas their names aren't particularly well known: Dipankara, Kassapa, Kankamuni(?) but there is no reason why they should not be well known, too. Some of these Bodhisattvas you have mentioned for instance, Visvapani is not really well known in the East. He is hardly ever mentioned in the literature. But, again, there is no reason why he shouldn't become well known in the West; he is the Bodhisattva connected, as far as I remember, with who is it?

Prasannasiddhi: Amoghasiddhi? Visvapani.

S.: No, not Visvapani; who is the one connected with Ratnasambhava?

Prasannasiddhi: ...

S.: Ah, Ratnapani, that's right. Ratnapani is not at all well known in the East, but then again neither is Ratnasambhava. But Ratnasambhava, as I mentioned, I think, a little while ago, seems to be becoming popular in the West, at least in the FWBO; perhaps Ratnapani will become popular too. So perhaps one does need to familiarize oneself with all these names, with all these aspects, because those Bodhisattvas or those Buddhas which are the popular ones in the East are not necessarily going to be the popular ones in the West, and vice versa.

Tape 12, Side 2

Prasannasiddhi: I was also wondering about the Adibuddha Vajradharma [Vajradhara?]. Have you actually used Vajrasattva as the Adibuddha, in a sense, or have you just not really thought in terms of an Adibuddha?

S.: I have not often spoken in terms of the Adibuddha concept. It is not an easy one to understand; it is one that could be easily misunderstood. I have, though, sometimes spoken of Vajrasattva in his as it were Buddha aspect as being like a sixth Buddha in relation to the standard five, and in that sense being, one might say, an Adibuddha. Guenther quotes an ... verse by, I think, Tilopa, to the effect that the term 'Adibuddha' indicates the beginninglessness of the Enlightenment experience. That, no doubt, would give one something to ponder on!

Jarmo: In connection with that, Milarepa seems to be very familiar and ... in the Movement, but it is not a familiar visualization practice. Is there any reason for this?

[128]

S.: It is not very usual to have visualizations of historical figures from tradition. There are exceptions: the main exceptions are Padmasambhava for the Nyingmapas and Tsongkhapa for the Gelugpas. But more usually it is what one might describe as archetypal Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are visualized except, of course, when one comes to visualize the Refuge Tree according to any particular tradition; that is rather an exception. But I suppose, if one is especially inspired by Milarepa, there is no reason why one should not visualize Milarepa. But he does not seem, even in the Tibetan tradition, to be a very popular or common object of visualization, even though he is very highly regarded and his Songs are very well known. One sees, for instance, representations of the Refuge Tree depicting Tsongkhapa in the central position, similarly Refuge Trees depicting Padmasambhava in the central position; I don't remember ever seeing a Refuge Tree depicting Milarepa in the central position. There may well be such, but the fact that I have not seen one probably indicates that they are very rare, if they exist at all.

Vessantara: In the ... initially Vajradhara is visualized at the centre rather than Milarepa.

S.: But then again, in the case of Tsongkhapa, it is Vajradhara who is the Adibuddha, but nonetheless Tsongkhapa is there in the centre of the thangka. It is obvious that there is a

definite reason for not putting Milarepa in that position. If there is, I must say I don't know what it is. Maybe tradition has simply developed that way. But it does seem a bit odd that, whereas the Gelugpas should have visualized Tsongkhapa and the Nyingmapas should have visualized Padmasambhava, the Kargyupas have not cared to visualize Milarepa. Perhaps it is partly explainable because the Kargyupas, spiritually speaking, were to a great extent absorbed by the Nyingmapas. Kargyupa spiritual practices eventually became Nyingmapa spiritual practices, which meant that the Kargyupas largely abandoned their distinctively Kargyupa spiritual practices and adopted, especially in the Karmakargyu school, the distinctively Nyingmapa spiritual practices. So that might be the reason one speculates, possibly for the supersession of the figure of Milarepa by that of Padmasambhava even for the Kargyupas.

: But why did they abandon [their own practices]?

S.: There are various traditional accounts, which I won't go into now, but it does seem as though the Nyingmapa was a very vigorous tradition in every way, and also very close, in some respects, spiritually close, to the Kargyupas, and they just absorbed the greater part, it would seem, of the Kargyupa tradition.

Mike: In relation to the Nyingmapas, I have heard this rumoured and said within the FWBO I want to clear it up are you a lineage-holder of the Nyingmapa school?

S.: I suppose it depends what you mean by lineage-holder.

Mike: Well, I don't know what a lineage-holder is, but I have heard it said that you are. I was wondering if there was any truth in that, and if there was some truth ... of Tibet ...

S.: The idea of lineage at least in the popular Tibetan sense is something I have discouraged, because it seems to lead to a sort of spiritual snobbery. For instance, you hear such expressions from people in the West involved with Tibetan religious groups [as]: 'Oh, it's a very powerful lineage' they are very fond of that sort of expression, 'a very powerful lineage'; so that, if you affiliate yourself to that lineage or join that lineage or become a lineage-holder of that lineage, you participate in that 'power'. It is almost like marrying into a wealthy, aristocratic family: you become as it were wealthy and aristocratic, too. So there [129] is very much that way of looking at things, and I really think this has got nothing to do with the genuine transmission of a spiritual teaching. So I don't like to speak in terms of lineage or lineage-holder; though I suppose, if I wanted to, I could quite legitimately say that I was a lineage-holder in that sense. But I would rather not mention that or stress that, for the reasons I have mentioned. I think it is so, in a way, childish: someone comes to you and says, 'Such-and-such Rinpoche has arrived; he is the tenth in the succession, or the fourteenth in the succession.' So one thing I may say is 'So what? Our Archbishop of Canterbury could go abroad and people could say, 'He is the 102nd Archbishop of Canterbury!' What about the Pope? He is the 260something Pope, going all those thousands of years back. So what? This is a form of being overwhelmed by authority, it is the charisma of position. The man can be this, that or the other; he can be the tenth reincarnation, allegedly, or can be the 102nd archbishop or the 260-somethingth pope, but he can still be a rogue, he can still be a rascal. Look at some of the popes that we have had, even some of the archbishops of Canterbury though, on the whole, they have been a more sober lot! And look at some of the Tibetan allegedly incarnate lamas who are around: can you really take them seriously? I have had

incarnate lamas coming to me in Kalimpong, quite a few of them, for help and advice and guidance, and I know quite well that they are not, all of them, what they are supposed to be. So I think this is all very childish. You have to understand the man, whoever he is, on his own account, for his own sake. It may be that, because someone was believed to be the reincarnation of somebody else, a great teacher, that he was given a very careful education. Well, that clearly will have been a good thing; he will have benefited from that. But even so, you must still try to see what the man himself is really like, not just blindly believe that he is the tenth this or the fourteenth that or the hundredth something else, and therefore you can accept everything that he says. Also, again, there is a sort of snobbery. A devout Roman Catholic might be rather flattered that he is appointed Chamberlain to the Pope, or something like that; well, you, perhaps, as a devotee of Tibetan Buddhism, feel rather flattered that you have got your initiation from the fourteenth this or the sixteenth that; do you see what I mean? One must really guard against these sort of things.

Mike: But why do they? Obviously, from the more enlightened point of view, it is the man himself that counts, which is reasonable enough. Why is this seen to be a succession of lineage-holders? Is that a purely institutional function or what?

S.: I think there is such a thing as a succession of lineage-holders in the spiritual sense, but I think, in many parts of the Buddhist world, it has been institutionalized and can't be taken too seriously in a spiritual sense. But I won't deny that there are such things as spiritual lineages in the genuine sense. Even then, the idea has to be understood clearly and with caution. It is not a question of something literally being handed on or handed down, like an antique vase or something like that; or even like genes, spiritual genes that are transmitted from generation to generation.

: In the 'Archetypal Guru' lecture [you said] that spiritual lineage is a very important principle to think, the way he uses to realize. (?) Could you say more about that?

S.: I can't remember my point of departure there, but what I do remember is a passage in the Vajracchedika Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, where the Buddha says quite clearly, that the Tathagata has I forget the exact words nothing to transmit. So, in a way, where does that leave the idea of lineage? Again, if one goes to the Pali Canon, the Buddha says that you should not believe [130] something simply because it has been transmitted, simply because it comes from tradition.

Pavel: [Going back to] Prasannasiddhi's original question, we have had very inspiring talks about Manjughosha, Tara, Avalokitesvara but I know absolutely nothing about Ratnapani. So I think it is quite difficult to take a certain spiritual practice which is not ... [even though] perhaps such a practice could be very suitable.

S.: Well, the difficulty is I don't know anything about Ratnapani! (Laughter.) I don't know anybody who does know anything about Ratnapani. I know the name, I know the meaning of the name, but I have not come across any description; I have not come across any sadhana of Ratnapani. I could look it up; there could be a sadhana somewhere. There is no Ratnapani Pari... Sutra or anything of that sort. But this is not surprising because in the Mahayana texts there are mentions of at least thousands of names of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and Buddhafields, so it is not surprising that there are some who we don't really know very much about. But one can always make a start; it is always possible to find out. If you want to know

about Ratnapani, I suppose the best thing to do, if you can't find any material in books, is to meditate on Ratnapani and ask yourself: 'Ratnapani? Jewel in the Hand: that must have some significance. He is associated with Ratnasambhava, so what would he probably look like?' I am sure you can find a drawing of Ratnapani in a book on Buddhist iconography. As far as I recollect, he would just be shown like an ordinary Bodhisattva, like any other Bodhisattva, in a sense, but in his hand he is holding a jewel. So that is your starting point: a Bodhisattva who looks just like any other sixteen-year-old Bodhisattva, but he has a jewel in his hand; and, presumably, because he is associated with Ratnasambhava, he is golden in colour what more do you need than that, to start with? That is how all the visualizations started. They didn't originally get them from the books, they got them from their meditations, and then they wrote them down in books, describing their visions which they saw in the meditations. I think people generally this is a point I have been wanting to make for some time underestimate what they can learn from meditation. You don't have always to ask me, you don't have always to look it up in books, not even in the dictionary. You can just reflect on it, you can meditate on it, and try to understand, try to see it in your meditation itself. You've got this source of knowledge, this source of understanding, within you, but you should use it, perhaps more than you actually do. You don't necessarily have to have a sort of gift for visualization, as some people do seem to have, but just reflect what could Ratnapani mean? What could he look like? And so on. After all, there are some visualizations, some sadhanas, you can trace back; we know exactly when they started, we know that the visualization and mantra recitation for White Tara goes back to a certain lama, to a certain teacher; we know the circumstances under which this practice originated. It didn't go back to the Buddha. There are lots of practices like this. So, if there is not in existence let us say, for the sake of argument a tradition of Ratnapani, there is no reason why you should not start one. But obviously you won't be able to do it just yet; it may take many years of practice.

Mike: I was just going to ask you were saying about reflection and meditation what sort of level of concentration are you talking about for reflection?

S.: If one is thinking in terms of discursive thought, well, that will be what is technically called upacara(?) samadhi, neighbourhood concentration, obviously. But there is no reason why you should not come back or come down to that after an experience of the dhyanas. But I think the main point I am trying to make is that people should be more aware of their own inner resources, both in terms of actual thought and in terms of [131] spiritual experience. There is a lot you can find out for yourself, either through your own independent thought (on the basis of what you have learned from books, from lectures), or on the basis of your own concentration and meditation experience. You have got exactly the same eight consciousnesses as all the great Buddhist gurus and lamas of the past. So you have got exactly the same equipment, exactly the same facilities, really! That is all that you really need.

: Do you think that this could become one of those quotes from you that will be taken the wrong way?

S.: Which one?

: People underestimating what they can learn from meditation.

S.: Let's wait and see; let's hope not, because at least I trust all of you understood what I really meant, so it will be up to all of you to see that what I have said is not misinterpreted or

misapplied.

Mike: You say that we have definitely the same faculties and equipment as all the great Buddhas and teachers of the past. Do you think this is exactly true, inasmuch as Sakyamuni seemed to have prodigious talents and ... energy?

S.: Ah, I did say 'gurus and lamas'. But one could even go further than that, and say, yes, one has got the same equipment, even, as the Buddhas of the past, [but] though that is true, maybe Buddhas have got other things besides!

Mike: So there seems to be quite a lot of confidence involved? It seems that what you are suggesting is that a lot of us lack confidence in our own abilities.

S.: Not necessarily just that. One doesn't want, of course, a blind confidence. But I think quite a lot of people generally don't realize that you can learn a lot by just thinking things over yourself and by just reflecting on them, even meditating on them. There are a lot of questions the answers to which you can find out by consulting your own experience. I think I did touch on this a few weeks ago at Padmaloka in the course of a study group. Very often people ask me things that they could just as easily find out for themselves by just consulting their own experience. It is almost as though people come and say, 'If I put my hand near the fire, will it hurt?' Well, go and try it; why ask me? It is like if you can find out for yourself, why ask somebody else? If you are not sure of the nature of your experience or how to interpret it, then you may consult somebody else, but not, perhaps, with regard to the nature of the experience itself the basic experience. For instance, somebody asks: 'Why do we forget things?' Well, you forget things, so you should be able to find out why you forget things. Why ask me? The reasons may not be the same in all cases. You may forget things for one kind of reason, I may forget for another; so consult your own experience, ask your guru(?): 'Why do I forget things? What happens? Under what sort of circumstances? In what conditions?' Why ask somebody else? You should easily be able to find out things like that, just by yourself. Do you see what I am getting at? Sometimes, maybe, it's just laziness; it is easier to ask somebody else. Or maybe it is just a habit one has got into. Perhaps, as I said before, one just genuinely doesn't realize that you can learn things, come to understand things, just by consulting or reflecting on or trying to deepen your own inner experience.

: Maybe there is not enough of this sort of activity in the FWBO that we send people away to try to consult their own experience, in the way that Milarepa sent away the young shepherd to find out what colour and shape the mind is.

[132]

S.: Well, there are difficulties, because in Tibet there are lots of mountains and solitary places where you could send young shepherds off in that way but [we] don't get many young shepherds, anyway! Maybe it is significant he was a young shepherd, because how would he be spending his time? With his sheep in the uplands, somewhere, grazing them, with not a soul within miles and miles. So even as a shepherd he would have plenty of time for thought and reflection; so Milarepa sent him off into the mountains. But with people, say, around the FWBO it is not easy to go off and just reflect on things for months together; perhaps you need to just reflect; maybe keeping a notebook; maybe not reading, not even taking your favourite Shelley or favourite volume of D.H. Lawrence, or Virginia Woolf or Barbara Cartland! Or James Joyce! Just taking yourself and perhaps a notebook.

Murray: Do you think there is an opening there for places like New Zealand and Australia, where we do have a lot of empty space, to set up something like a whole network of solitary facilities that people from even Europe could use, as well as ['local'] people?

S.: It would be quite good, if well, there is also the visa problem; there is that little problem, isn't there?

Murray: People could go for three or six months.

S.: Ah, ... but what is the point of going all that distance just for three months? I was thinking in terms of people going for a few years. But, yes, three months is better than nothing, for sure.

Murray: As an example, at some point probably some people would go away for a number of years, even, by themselves. (?)

S.: I think it wouldn't be a bad idea in some cases, but they have got to be able to do it. It is not just whiling away your time, it's not like going to a Greek island and just sunbathing and all that sort of thing; that's different. I think you would have to go away as a relatively mature person, having read a lot, even thought a lot, known a lot, and just spend time reflecting on what you know and trying to deepen your experience: not just your experience of meditation in the technical sense but your whole experience of life, your whole experience of yourself. It is no use sending a raw young person away in this way, who hasn't read much, hasn't studied much. But I think, yes, one does need a greater element of that in the whole Movement, and it would be good if there were more facilities for people to be accommodated and supported and just left alone just left alone. I have begun recently I will mention it now, because it has been a bit on my mind I have begun to wonder in fact, I might have mentioned it already what sort of understanding people have got of the nature of the solitary retreat. Have I talked about this?

Voices: No.

S.: Oh. I have talked about in England, then, recently. I started [thinking] that at least some people have got what I would regard as a rather strange idea about solitary retreats; because one person wrote to me, or let me know, that during his solitary retreat he was watching TV, and he seemed to think it quite a normal thing that during your solitary retreat you watched TV. He was watching it every day. And somebody else wrote too me, and she seemed to think it was quite a normal thing that on your solitary retreat you were (1) receiving mail from all your friends back home, even though you were only away for a couple of weeks, [and] (2) you visited various people in the neighbourhood and had tea with them, and even had outings with them, all on your solitary retreat! And all this was [133] related to me in a completely naive, open sort of way, as if to suggest, well, that's all part of a solitary retreat; you were just away somewhere different. So I am just wondering has the understanding of the nature of a solitary retreat changed? Am I out of touch? (Laughter.) Am I labouring under the misapprehension that people still think that a solitary retreat means a solitary retreat in the strict sense? Could anyone enlighten me, or have I just got it all wrong?

Dhammarati: There is quite a range of activities. Some people more or less spend the time just sitting meditating, while other people would bring quite a range of reading material and

read quite a bit, study quite regularly a bit, ...quite a bit.

S.: I can understand people going away for a quiet couple of weeks on what used to be called, sometimes, a Dharma holiday; but the people concerned definitely used the expression 'solitary retreat'. I am not saying it is wrong just to go away to a quiet place, do a bit of reading, see a few people in the neighbourhood; if that is what you need, fair enough. But I begin to wonder whether 'solitary retreat' hasn't come to mean, in a standard way, just that; to wonder whether people do any longer really go away and have a solitary retreat in the sense of actually literally being solitary, not seeing anybody else at all and concentrating only on meditation, mainly, a bit of Dharma study not just ordinary reading and the rest of the time just doing nothing, being mindful. Because that is what is really meant by 'solitary retreat'. I thought I would mention this just in case there had been any misunderstanding on the subject.

: Would you say that is still the case, Bhante where you go somewhere to do a solitary retreat and find that local people are very interested and it may even be very difficult to avoid them?

S.: I think it depends where you go. I think you must choose a place, if possible, if you have a choice, where there aren't any local people; not on the edge of a village somewhere out on the moors, if possible, where no one can see you, no one knows that you are there. Or if someone is, say, supplying you with milk, just make it clear that 'I have come here to be on my own.' Otherwise well-meaning people, not understanding, may think you don't like being on your own, so they want to cheer you up and give you a bit of company. It doesn't seem to occur to them, sometimes, that you have come there because you want to be on your own. I think perhaps people find it very difficult to imagine that anyone should actually want to be on their own; so they think you can't want to be on your own, you must be glad of a bit of company. And perhaps they feel like having a chat, anyway, so along they come! and say, 'I hope I'm not disturbing you!' I think possibly a good idea would be whether in New Zealand or anywhere else if we had a very big estate, with fencing around it, and there was a definite entrance where people can come, even members of the public who are interested or curious, and there will be someone there perhaps to answer their questions and be sort of manager of the whole estate, and maybe you would have the kitchens there where the food is cooked; but dotted all over the estate are solitary retreat cabins, well apart from one another, where members of the public are not allowed to go; and the people who are in charge and running the whole thing, and dealing with the public, would just make sure that the public does not go beyond a certain point. We saw, when we were doing some recent study, that that is the system in some of the Forest Hermitages in Ceylon that if people want to offer food, they can just come to the public area and hand over the food and even cook it. But they are not allowed to go inside and they are not allowed to go where the huts are. The forest monks usually come to the dining hall once a day and just eat whatever has been prepared, and then go away. We could have some arrangement like that, or food could be taken around the cabins, if need be, if people didn't want to do their own cooking. But probably that would be better where you had cabins [134] dotted here and there, quite distant from one another, in a large estate which was secluded from the public.

Murray: You could buy a few hundred square miles in Australia.

S.: Well, I've no objection! You could do the same in Canada, I think, probably even the same in Sweden and Norway, maybe Finland.

Bram: What seems to be becoming more popular nowadays is what people call a 'soliday', a sort of mixture between a holiday and a solitary.

S.: Oh, I hadn't heard that one: 'soliday'.

Bram: Do you think that that is acceptable, or do you think that people should choose more clearly between a holiday and a solitary, and just be clear about what they want?

S.: I think the main thing is people should be clear. I think also they should not use the phrase 'solitary retreat' if it is liable to be misunderstood, because if people tell me, certainly, that they have gone on or are going on a solitary retreat, I definitely think they are going away not seeing people, just meditating and doing Dharma study; I definitely think that. So one must not confuse the issue by using the word in a too liberal sense. Sometimes people need, perhaps a holiday, or need a Dharma holiday; fair enough. But even that does not replace a solitary retreat in the strict sense; you definitely need the solitary retreat. You might say that the solitary retreat is, so to speak, compulsory, whereas the Dharma holiday is optional.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, don't you think that perhaps even this complex of solitary retreat cabins might become a bit too distracting? Because, if you wanted to go out for a walk, you might bump into your next-door neighbour who was also going out for a walk.

S.: I suppose it just depends how big the whole place is. Perhaps we had better just leave that to Murray!

Murray: [We'll] work something out.

Danavira: What you were saying, Bhante you think, then, that there is a place in the Movement for what ... in the three year retreat, a retreat for a specific length of time like that; as mentioned, say, in *The Way of the White Clouds*?

S.: I think there is a place for that. Perhaps one need not think so rigidly in terms of the three years, three months, three weeks, three days and three hours; but, yes, a quite long, genuinely solitary retreat, devoted almost exclusively, perhaps, to meditation and Dharma study.

Dhammarati: You've maybe covered this ... but could you say something about the role of the solitary in the whole range of practice? What does the solitary ...?

S.: I think you need to be alone sometimes. I think that is quite essential for every human being ideally, to be alone some part of every day. That is rather difficult, but I think you certainly need to go away and to experience yourself independently of your interaction with other people. Because, usually, we know and we experience ourselves only to the extent that we are interacting with other people, where we can't separate out what is just us, what is ours. I think we need to be able to do that; we need to be able to breathe, almost, sometimes. Especially if you live in a city, it is very difficult to get away from other people and from their influence on you in one way or [135] another. So I think, first of all, you need to get away and experience yourself, and I think you need to experience yourself by yourself before you can really start deepening your experience of yourself very much. I think this is essential to the leading of a balanced human life, [not] to speak of spiritual life. If you are a healthy human being, you will want to get away from time to time; it will be an actual need, in a quite

healthy objective sense, for you to get away and to be really on your own. If you can't do this or don't want to do this, I think there is probably something wrong with you.

: I have heard that you said some while ago that you thought some people could not make use of a solitary retreat properly, and that binary retreats of more than one person might be more useful. Is this correct?

S.: I have mentioned the idea of the double retreat, as it were, but I did not mean it to take the place of the solitary retreat. I think that the double retreat, or binary retreat, or the retreat by two people just together, certainly has its value, especially, perhaps, if one is more experienced and the other less experienced, one is an Order Member, the other a Mitra. I think that can be of great value, even for short periods. But that doesn't replace the solitary retreat.

: It sounds like one of the misconceptions, because I have heard it said in the FWBO that this was opposed to the solitary retreat, that it could replace the solitary retreat...

S.: I think I can't remember for sure I was thinking then in the case of, perhaps, a Mitra who was not quite ready for it or would not be able really to face two weeks on his own, but who could perhaps very usefully spend two weeks away somewhere quiet with an Order Member that he got on with well, meditating and studying. The presence of the Order Member, or the more experienced person, would make sure that the Mitra (if it was a Mitra) did stick to a programme of meditation and study. It would be quite enjoyable, then, doing it with somebody else. And there would be the additional bonus of the actual personal interaction, spiritual friendship and so on. But even that doesn't replace the solitary retreat.

: Considering how busy quite a few Order Members are, how regularly do you think an Order Member should go on solitary retreat, and for what period of time?

S.: I think I have said in the past that every Order Member should try to have a solitary retreat every year for one month. When I had the Chairmen at Padmaloka recently, I think, I went around were there any chairmen there? Yes: not many of them had had a solitary retreat recently; I think only one had had during the previous year, and I think the majority had not had for three or four years. But anyway, they have undertaken to do something to rectify the situation.

Vessantara: Something which I have heard you quoted as saying is that an Order Member should go away for a month every year, either on solitary or binary or to Vajraloka for a month. So I think, out of that, people may have [concluded] that those are interchangeable and would have the same effect...

S.: Yes, I think they may be interchangeable according to circumstances, but may not necessarily have the same effect. For instance, to give you an example, you may not be feeling in a very positive mood; you may be feeling that you really need the spiritual support of other people meditating with you. Well, then, in those circumstances it is probably better to go to Vajraloka than to go and have a solitary retreat by yourself. Not that the solitary retreat is not in principle better, but that at that particular time, at that particular moment, you are not in a position to make the proper use of it.

Pavel: Could you say something about the role of solitary retreats in your life?

[136]

S.: At present, I tend to have my solitary retreats in small doses. I try to spend some time by myself every day. If I don't spend some part of the day by myself, I don't feel satisfied; because, obviously, if one is with other people, you are having to give some attention to them, and one needs to give some attention, so to speak, to oneself or within oneself. So, right down to the present, I have adopted this principle. It is not easy for me to go away for, say, even a week or a month, especially as I am getting older and don't particularly want to do things for myself, in the sense of cooking and cleaning and all that; but I do feel that it is quite necessary to have some time to myself every day. I don't think people always realize that; in some parts of the Movement they don't. But in other parts they do. But I would say that everybody needs this some part of the day, even, to yourself.

Pavel: When you were in India, did you go for solitary retreats?

S.: No, I must say I didn't think of it in those terms at that time. I think probably because I naturally enjoyed being by myself. I didn't mind being by myself, I liked being by myself, I liked meditating, I liked studying, I liked writing; most of my activities were solitary activities. So my life as it were naturally organized itself so that I spent quite a lot of time by myself. I don't think I ever felt a need actually to go away for a long time at a stretch.

Tape 13, Side 1

I think the last time that I actually lived on my own for any length of time was when I was at Albemarle, on the other side of Norfolk, before moving to Padmaloka. That was quite pleasant, only I had to do my own shopping and cooking, and the shopping brought me into some contact with people which I think I would have preferred to avoid. Also the cooking seemed a bit of a waste of time; I didn't really mind doing it, but it meant I had less time for other things including letters.

Pavel: Bhante, could you say something about the proper preparation for a solitary retreat? For example, putting a number of ...s off during the two weeks before you go on solitary?

S.: I think a lot of people don't prepare properly for their solitaires. I think you should, as far as possible, go off without having anything on your mind that is going to trouble you while you are away. You certainly should not take work away with you to do, or even things to think about of a practical organizational nature while you are away on retreat. Once you are on retreat, you should not have to think about anything that you have left behind at all; just put it completely out of your mind. You must be able to do that to get the full benefit from the solitary retreat. You mustn't go away with any worries or any backlog of work that you have to think about, much less still things you actually have to do. And you should not arrive, ideally, for the solitary retreat straight from work, so to speak; well, that shouldn't be the case with any retreat. You should arrive sufficiently rested though, of course, in the case of a solitary retreat it may be a little difficult, because you may have had a long journey to get there. But certainly you shouldn't arrive worn out from weeks and weeks of overwork. That is not the best way of starting a solitary retreat. You should think in advance, plan in advance, what you will need; take the things that you will need; make arrangements, perhaps, to be supplied with the things that you need, so that during the solitary retreat itself you don't have

to think about these things. It all seems quite straightforward, it seems quite commonsensical though people do not always organize themselves in this way.

[137]

Steve: It appears that there are very few places in England for solitary retreats. I believe there is a place in Wales ... a couple of years, and just to be able to go to a place, do a solitary retreat, doesn't seem very easy. It's not really catered for very well. Which indicates that there are not many people doing [that], so it seems to be quite lacking ... in general terms of solitary retreats. Also ... Vajraloka is not used as much by Order Members, which is quite ...

S.: It is no doubt a question of people getting their priorities right. It is not easy to find land, even, because in Norfolk we have made inquiries a number of times for land that we could even rent, on which we could put a caravan; but we haven't met with any success yet. And that is in a relatively agricultural county like Norfolk.

Chairman: We have covered three of the eight questions.

S.: Ah, well, come on, then, because we got on to something other than spiritual friendship, didn't we, somehow?

Gerry: There is a quote in the text: 'The Enlightenment of a Buddha is obtained by serving spiritual friends.'

1) This suggests to me that serving spiritual friends would constitute a Path to Enlightenment in itself. Would you comment on that?

(2) If this is so, we don't seem to be doing a lot of this in the FWBO. What can we do to actively encourage it?

S.: I am not sure what the original term is here for 'serving', but anyway let us take it quite literally. One thing that I noticed, and others noticed, in the very early days of the FWBO was that people didn't like serving. A lot of the people the majority of the people who came along in the early days definitely did not like serving, in any way. We found this out, or I found this out, very quickly in various small ways. For instance, after a meeting, after a lecture maybe on the Bodhisattva Ideal, in fact this did occur several times when I was giving the lectures on the Bodhisattva Ideal series people would thoroughly enjoy the lecture, there would be a big round of applause at the end; but if you asked, a bit later, if anyone would mind helping with the washing up (because everybody had had tea after the lecture), no one would stir; it was quite clear no one wanted to do this, or almost no one wanted to do it. And it was usually just the same two or three people did it. Others were definitely very reluctant, and we noticed this, year by year, that people didn't want to do anything of the nature of service. And we had quite a few discussions about this I won't recapitulate them. But people definitely seemed to think that if you were serving you put yourself in an inferior position, the position of a servant to others, and that was the last position that they wanted to be in. So this sort of attitude was carried over even into the spiritual sphere, as it were. Things have changed within the FWBO, and far fewer people have those sort of feelings about serving, but there is still a certain amount of reluctance around; or perhaps one might say sometimes one gets the impression people don't know how to serve, they are so unaccustomed they just don't know how to go about it. They seem to have not enough feeling for other people, not enough awareness of

them, sensitivity with regard to their needs, to be able to serve. They seem, often, very clumsy in the way that they serve, or almost sometimes halfhearted; one gets that impression. So I think that there is certainly room for a cultivation of this attitude within the FWBO to a greater extent. As for serving spiritual friends being a Path to Enlightenment, well, perhaps it is, or at least it is an important part of it, [138] because in serving you are getting beyond yourself; you are ceasing to be for yourself the centre of the whole universe; your attitude is becoming more other-regarding and to that extent more positive, more spiritual, one might say. So serving is quite important. But I think certainly within the Order people don't have the same reservations about serving that they used to have. I think nowadays, for instance, around the LBC, people will serve tea and even do the washing up after classes quite happily, and down in Croydon there is the Hockney's Restaurant; people are quite happy serving. But there is the Cherry Orchard, too: the women there are quite happy most of them just serving. I know some women I am not referring to the Cherry Orchard now don't like serving men, but that is for rather different reasons, perhaps. No need to go into that.

: ... serving in terms of providing the needs of the spiritual friend here. I think there is one reference to bedsteads.

S.: Well, you mustn't forget that the context is monastic; it is providing your spiritual friend, who is, let us say, a monk, with food, clothing, shelter, furniture and all the other traditional requirements. So don't take that too literally. One can serve those who are as it were junior to you; you can serve those who are equals; you can serve those who are in a sense superiors. You can serve spiritual friends in the sense of gurus, spiritual friends in the sense of your peers, and spiritual friends in the sense of those who look up to you. There is no limit to the people that you can serve. It has the same effect, perhaps it is sometimes more effective, to serve those who are inferior to you, because that gives an even greater blow to your ego. There used to be a good old custom in the British Army Buddhadasa will correct me if I am wrong that on Christmas Day the officers served the other ranks. I don't know whether the custom continues, but it used to be the case. It showed willing! So Order Members should not hesitate to serve Mitras should not expect that the Mitras will serve the Order Members always. Nowadays Mitras are often very happy to serve Order Members, but there should be occasions, no doubt, on which Order Members are quite happy to serve the Mitras. It must be reciprocal, according to the occasion. It doesn't mean that when you become an Order Member you thereby are automatically entitled to the service of the Mitras who happen to be around; no, that should not be the attitude at all.

: You shouldn't have told them that until after the ordinations!

Chairman: Buddhapalita.

S.: This is actually a new question?

Buddhapalita: This is a new question. Sometimes I find myself wanting to show my appreciation of you in a formal manner. In India or somewhere like that, perhaps I could join my hands and bow to you or touch my hands to your feet as a traditional mark of respect; but, within this cultural context, I find myself inhibited from these expressions. I wondered whether you knew of any Western equivalents that we could use, or even use Eastern ones in a particular context, say ... or something like that.

S.: I don't think we have any Western equivalents except distinctively Christian ones, which probably wouldn't be appropriate! But I think these are the sort of things have to grow and develop naturally. By virtue of the fact that they are things which spring originally from one's feelings, perhaps one's deeper feelings, one cannot prescribe in advance what particular path, what sort of expression those feelings should take. But I expect that, as the years go by, and in the FWBO we develop a sort of tradition of our own, an appropriate cultural [139] expression of our own for these sort of feelings, those expressions will gradually become as it were standardized. But I don't think we can work anything out in advance. I think that makes things rather difficult for this generation of, say, Order Members and Mitras, and maybe for two or three more generations, but that in a way is the fate of all pioneers that things are not planned out and laid down for you. It is quite noticeable I certainly notice it when I go to India, everybody knows, in a sense, how to behave. It is not that they have been told, or they have even learned, it is quite natural, it is quite spontaneous, and everyone is quite happy expressing their feelings in that particular way. But often one gets the impression that in the West people have got feelings but they don't quite know what to do with them; they don't know how to express them, they don't know how to behave. And this applies not only to the question you have mentioned, but all sorts of more formal situations. You meet someone; very often you don't know how to behave. You don't know whether to shake them by the hand, or just say 'Hi!' or something like that; you just don't know, because there is nothing standard, it is all in the melting pot. Sometimes you find people coming along to the Centre and just sort of stand around; they don't know how to behave, don't even know what to do with their hands or their feet sometimes. But this is the sort of situation we have got ourselves into in the West by giving up tradition. It is not going to be easy to recreate a tradition, either in the way that you mention or in other ways. You know what difficulty people often have with bowing to the shrine, to begin with; well, that is more or less established now. I think even newcomers get used to it quite quickly. I think perhaps one has this is me just thinking aloud to start with just ordinary politeness or just try to be aware of the situation, aware of other people, sensitive to other people's needs, and just act accordingly.

Dhammarati: It would [not?] be appropriate, in a way, for instance, to just .. puja and bowing to the shrine ... to maybe borrow from other traditions, like bring in ... Because I think it has got to the stage where feelings are better than cultural forms ... to express them.

S.: Right, yes, that's true. If that in fact is the case, the feelings will burst out and they will take a certain form and a certain tradition will be established. I think that is inevitable.

Dhammarati: I am thinking, for instance, of the way table manners are starting to spread, that people come and eat now ... everybody sitting at the table. Wouldn't it be possible to feed in suggestions in a similar way that we act ... ?

S.: Well, it has taken us all these years to introduce even table manners! It will probably take another couple of decades to introduce these other things! When you think of such a simple matter as table manners. In the early days of the FWBO, a lot of people reacted against them, they regarded them as being very middle-class manners and customs and so on. Some of them wanted to show how spontaneous and natural they were. But, instead of being spontaneous and natural, they were just uncouth, which is quite a different thing.

Bram: According to Gampopa, it is a good practice to gaze at your teacher. According to my education, it is very impolite! How do you experience it yourself, for instance?

S.: Ah! I once put this question to one of my teachers I forget who it was, I am sorry to say. He said that, according to the Hinayana and even the Mahayana, it was not appropriate to look at the teacher; you should just keep your head down out of respect. But he said according to the Vajrayana it is good to look at the teacher. So there is a difference of traditions, and of course in Tibet itself if [140] they are not actually studying the Vajrayana they have to observe the Hinayana and Mahayana principles, they look down; it is considered not polite to look at the teacher. But in the Vajrayana context, of course, they do just that. So I don't know where that leaves us.

think one must distinguish between looking and staring. I think, in practice, a lot of people don't appreciate the distinction. They mean, perhaps, to look, but actually they stare, and that is regarded as impolite in our culture. In fact, some people react very strongly in some, I believe, working-class circles; if you look at another man he will become quite uneasy and he will ask you, perhaps, rather sharply: 'Who are you looking at?' 'Looking at' somebody else is regarded as challenging, is regarded as a sign of aggression, and the hackles, so to speak, of

the person you are looking at rise. If you are not careful, you can find yourself getting into a fight in this way. Well, this is how it is in Britain; I don't know whether it is the same on the Continent, but it can happen. People take a direct look as challenging and aggressive. You might even find that that is the case with animals. But I think, within the context of the spiritual community, it is good to look at people, perhaps more than we do; but we must be careful it is a look and not a stare. Some people find it difficult to look without making a sort of grimace do you know what I mean? without winking or screwing up their face in some sort of way; they can't just look. As in the communication exercises, they find the 'just looking' quite difficult. But no doubt, with practice, it will become more natural. Of course, you have to be careful looking at members of the opposite sex; that could clearly be misunderstood.

Chairman: The next question comes from Dhammarati.

Dhammarati: (1) Speaking to a number of people at interviews we have had, one thing that strikes me is that you very seldom tell people what they should do when people go ... and get requests ... But Gampopa suggests that we should not disobey the commands of our spiritual friends. Would you like it if people were to genuinely put their resources at your disposal if you have things that you wanted to do, or are you satisfied that people understand your principles and apply them?

S.: No, I think I would be quite happy if people did put their resources at my disposal. But they must be really able to do that, and it is not as easy as it sounds. They must not only be able to do it but sustain it, without feeling resentment or without reactivity. But it would be very useful, because it just would save my time, and time is at present precious. It would save my time if I could just say, 'Look, do this and do that; get on with this, get on with that.' I am speaking now more with regard to organizational matters, not matters concerning their own spiritual life and spiritual development. But it is quite true that, when people come to see me, especially perhaps Mitras or even Order Members, I do not very readily give advice. I think it is much more important just to talk the matter over that people want to see me about and try to clarify the issues, so that they can see the issues that are involved for themselves and come to their own conclusions; because very often, especially in the case of Mitras, what one wants is to encourage people to be more self-confident, take greater responsibility for their lives. They have not been doing that, perhaps, not had an opportunity of doing it for so long; they

have been listening to mother and father, they have been listening to their teachers at school, listening to all sorts of other voices, all sorts of authorities, and here they are just beginning to think for themselves; you have got to encourage that, encourage them to take their own decisions and accept responsibility for their own lives. So the best thing you can do this is what I feel personally is just to help them clarify issues and see [141] things for themselves, so that they can make their own decisions. I don't think you help people by just handing them down decisions or advice.

Dhammarati: I can't think of any precedents for that sort of relationship where an individual puts his resources so completely at another individual's disposal. Honestly, I suppose part of the reaction to that would be fear. Could you say something about the nature of this ... ?

S.: The fact that one experiences fear is interesting, because it means a lack of trust. There are a few people, a few Order Members, who actually are quite prepared to do whatever I ask them to do. There are not many of them, and of course I naturally try to gather them at Padmaloka, where they are ready to hand! But fortunately, there are a few of them, otherwise life could be even more difficult for me than it is at present!

Dhammarati: I wondered if you could say a bit more about that kind of relationship, because it is in a way such an alien one, so unfamiliar.

S.: I suppose it is, in a way. I don't think it is something one can demand or expect. I think it is something that develops quite naturally. I don't think I have ever made unreasonable demands on people, but I certainly increase my demands as time goes on; but in step with my knowledge of people and perhaps their knowledge of me. I know that there are certain people of whom I can ask certain things. I know that there are certain other people of whom I can't ask, even among Order Members. But I also know that as time goes by there are more and more people within the Order, and even outside it, of whom or from whom I can ask more and more things. So the situation is definitely improving steadily in this respect. I think Order Members generally find that they are able to ask more and more of at least a few Order Members whom they know. They know that there are certain people who will not let them down, people who will help them in any difficulty or give them whatever support they need, or rally round when necessary; they know this. And this feeling, this knowledge, is growing all the time. You can't have a spiritual community without it, obviously.

Have we come to the last one now?

Chairman: Almost the last one, the second last.

Dhammarati: Gampopa suggests that we should please our spiritual friends, and in the seminar you comment that it sets up a sympathetic joy which makes communication between the teacher and the disciple easier. Could you say something about the kind of things that we could do to make that pleasing easier and what we could do to set up that condition?

S.: Doesn't Gampopa, though, say somewhere that what pleases the spiritual friend most is when one follows his advice? Not follow his advice in the sense of 'Do what he tells you to do,' but when you follow the same principles, the same ideals that he himself is following. Obviously, this gives the greatest pleasure. But looking at it on a slightly lower level than that: I think the danger with spiritual friends at all levels is that you just think in terms of

taking from them taking information, taking knowledge, taking practical help, taking whatever but your attitude usually is one of taking. That is quite one-sided. So if you do something to please your spiritual friend, at whatsoever level, it means, instead of thinking of your needs, in a sense you are thinking of his; though maybe he hasn't actually got a need, but that doesn't matter. For instance, you might take him along a bunch of flowers well, it is not that he needs flowers, he can get along without them perfectly well but if you take along, say, a bunch of flowers, it shows that you have wanted to do something for him; you haven't thought simply in [142] terms of him doing things for you, you haven't thought simply in terms of taking, you have thought in terms of giving, and that makes the relationship more mutual, more reciprocal. You see? And when a relationship becomes more mutual, more reciprocal, obviously more can happen within that relationship, rather than if it is a very one-sided one, with one person always giving and the other person always taking. It becomes a little bit evened up, at least in certain respects.

Dhammarati: Could you think of a concrete example, like you bring something very helpful, maybe because it is so practical, and other areas that would be concrete?

S.: I think, obviously, one should be considerate. For instance, if you make an appointment, well, turn up on time. This may sound very elementary it is very elementary but, just before leaving England, I had the experience of a particular Order Member twice making an appointment to see me and twice not turning up, without any subsequent explanation at all. So I still don't know why he didn't turn up, or what happened. This isn't really very good. It might be that there was a perfectly good explanation, but I suspect probably not, because I think had there been I probably would have heard it by this time. For instance, if he had suddenly been taken ill, or whatever. So one can be thoughtful and considerate in this way, and not take up too much time. Sometimes I have found that people have come to see me, and they are warned by Kovida that 'Bhante is very busy this afternoon; he can only really give you half an hour, so please remember that.' They don't remember; once they have got in there, they are determined to stay as long as they like, almost! I must say that it is not very common. I was going to say a bit more than that, but perhaps I won't. But people definitely forget, or don't even try to remember, that I might have somebody else to see, or I have got to go out, and I have just squeezed them in because perhaps they have phoned several times and asked 'Please can I see Bhante?', so in the end I have agreed; but once they have got into my study, they just seem to forget all about my convenience, or the convenience of other people I might be having to see. If they are in a very difficult position, I can understand that, but sometimes they seem to have come just for a little chat, and nothing more than that, and then it becomes a bit more understandable. So one should try to be considerate. This applies, I must say, much more to Mitras and Friends, not really to Order Members, usually. Anyway, let's have the last question.

Chairman: [Dhammarati's got another one](?)

S.: Oh. Oh, well, save the world!

Dhammarati: Gampopa says that we should ask the spiritual friend for the Dharma as if we were ill, the spiritual friend is the physician and the Dharma is the cure. The analogy [shows the] kind of urgency that is required, of course. But where the analogy breaks down for me is that you just have to tell the doctor that you are ill, and he usually does the rest; you don't have to ask any questions. I must say that a couple of times after these question and answer

sessions I have felt frustrated, because I have felt a kind of edge around [the] experience; you get glimpses of it, but trying to actually formulate the question ..., clarifying, communicating in some depth ...

S.: I know what you mean. I think a lot depends on the size of the gathering. This is why, on all the Tuscanies, I believe, we have had these smaller, more informal groups towards the end of the retreat, and I expect we will have them this time, too. I think they are more satisfactory in this respect. But I think perhaps to say something about Gampopa's image in the case of the FWBO we should think of the whole Movement in terms of the medicine. Though I am not so [143] sure that I like the image of the medicine; because that is a bit negative. It is as though it is not a question of the medicine but also a question of the amrita; not only the negative but also the positive. And you might say that the medicine, or the amrita, the nectar of immortality, is sort of present in a diluted form throughout the whole Movement, and everything that we do. So I don't think it is a question of coming to any individual as though he, and just he, has got the medicine, and you have only got to get it from him, or get him to give you the pill; I think that might encourage the wrong sort of attitude. But just see the whole Movement as the ocean of medicine, or the ocean of nectar; it is just up to you to dip in here and dip in there, and make the best possible, the fullest possible, use of it that you can. But I think to go back to what you were asking it is only in the smaller situation that you can have the more intensive exchange, in which questions can be clarified in a more existential way.

Dhammarati: So there isn't anything that you suggest that could ..., ... ?

S.: No, I think this is the biggest group we have had on a Tuscany anyway, and I think it is stretching it really quite a lot to have so many people in a Question and Answer session. I think probably we do as well as it is possible to do; and I think you may well notice the difference when we meet in smaller numbers. Sometimes the questions which arise are relatively personal, and not everybody among, say, three dozen people is equally interested in this question or that question. You can't expect them to really concentrate on it and really put their minds on to it. So that means that there isn't a general atmosphere of attention and interest in that particular question, as there would be if there were just four or five of you present and you were all interested in that question, and all quite happy to go into it and explore it. Something would be much more likely to happen, so to speak, under those circumstances, than within the larger group. I think we all find this, in one way or another, within our experience: other factors being equal, the smaller situation is the more intensive one.

Chairman: That's the last of the questions we have. I know it's rather late, but I don't know if you have any points from this chapter?

S.: I don't think so. I might later on, on reflection, but at the moment I don't. Even though there were not many questions, we seem to have had quite a full session, so all right.

Voices: Thank you, Bhante.

[144]

[NB: THERE IS NO DAY 8 IN THE TRANSCRIPT.][29.9.85]

Tape 14, Side 1

Chairman: Tonight we have a question and answer session on the chapter entitled 'The Instruction in the Transitoriness of the Composite', Chapter 4, and tonight we have seven questions one question fewer than last night! The first question is Dharmadhara's.

Dharmadhara: When I was a medical student, we used as a text a book called 'On Death and Dying,' by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross I don't know if you've come across it?

S.: I have heard of it.

Dharmadhara: It was about her work with the dying. I thought it was a significant book at the time not just for doctors, but for anyone working with dying and bereaved people. She analyses the five stages of the process that you go through when you die or lose something significant: starting with denial, then anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The book is basically about this process. I thought it had wider applications, and since I have mentioned it a few times within the Friends people seem to have picked up quite a lot on it, wanting to know more about it. I wondered if you had come across it.

S.: I haven't read it, but I have seen references to it. From what you say, it would seem that it would be a good idea if we looked at it more closely, perhaps. Just mention those five stages again.

Dharmadhara: The first one is denial.

S.: That is when someone near and dear to you dies, your first reaction is to deny that it has happened, you can't believe it, you refuse to believe it.

Dharmadhara: Yes. Also if you are told that you are going to die or you find that you are going to die, you deny that it could be you. The second one is anger, where it goes a bit deeper and the threat of it makes you angry. Then bargaining; trying to get ..., I suppose. Then depression sets in. Then, finally, in some people, acceptance they are quite ready for it. It occurred to me that these stages can be seen in other ways: say, someone not being ordained! (S. chuckles.) Some significant loss or sense of loss.

S.: Yes. It does seem to be a common pattern of reaction, one might say, to unwelcome truths. You haven't brought the book with you?

Dharmadhara: No, I hoped you knew it (?).

S.: Perhaps we should try to put it into circulation when we get back. : The second question was from Vessantara on the five stages. It may have been answered.

S.: On these same five stages?

: Yes, these same five stages.

[145]

Vessantara: It is not entirely answered if we take it that Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's view of these

five stages of response to death [represents a common response], it might well be the case that, if you go through, say, a meditation working towards Insight, working towards your acceptance of your own physical death and a kind of spiritual death, if you like, you will go through these five stages in that meditation practice. I wondered whether you think that pattern of denial, anger, [bargaining], depression, acceptance is what you actually find as you approach acceptance.

S.: You may do, or you may not. The fact that you are meditating at all the fact that you are meditating, for instance, on transitoriness or death would suggest that you had, to begin with, a different attitude towards these things than perhaps the average person has. Perhaps, at least theoretically, you have come to terms with the fact that you are going to die, and perhaps you ought to meditate upon that simply in order that you can realize the significance of the situation still more deeply. This lady's researches were presumably conducted with regard to people who were not Buddhists, not even nominal ones, and who certainly were not meditating, or perhaps did not have much in the way of spiritual interest. But, from my own knowledge of people and my own limited knowledge of the way people react to death, those five stages would seem to me quite intelligible, quite acceptable. They do seem to make sense.

Dhammarati: Just to tag on a wee bit where Gerry's talk ... just the meditation on death, you have talked about any kind of change being, in a way, a death as far as ... is concerned. Would you say that that is as far as you are resisting? Is there any big spiritual change you would go through [with] those five stages?

S.: To the extent that you are resisting, whether consciously or unconsciously. Dharmadhara mentioned that perhaps the five stages could be applied to other experiences which we find it difficult to accept. Maybe if you are married and your wife tells you one day that she has fallen in love with somebody else and she is going to leave you: so, first of all, your reaction, I would imagine, would be one of disbelief; you just refuse to accept it, you just can't believe that this has happened. And then what was the next one?

Dhammarati: Anger.

S.: Anger, yes! After that, yes, the stage would probably be you would be very angry indeed. You might want to murder her. Such feelings are very strong. And then?

Dhammarati: Bargaining.

S.: Bargaining. Then, yes, you might even try to bargain: 'Just stay with me a bit longer; maybe things will get better and, OK, I won't do this and I won't go along to the FWBO any more ' (laughter). You see what I mean, you start bargaining. And then, what was the next?

Dharmadhara: Depression.

S.: Depression. Well, no, she decides that she is not going to strike any bargain and off she goes. So you feel very, very depressed. And then?

Dharmadhara: Acceptance.

S.: Wasn't there a stage of 'Why should this happen to me?' or was that a subdivision of the first stage?

[146]

Dharmadhara: It was the first.

S.: But this is a reaction of 'Why should this happen to me?' If, for instance, someone is told that they have got cancer well, a common reaction is 'Why should this happen to me?', as though God, or fate, had just picked on you. Perhaps that reaction can be subsumed under these five. But, yes, in the sort of case I have mentioned, eventually no doubt you get over your depression, you accept the situation in a way, and at the first opportunity you repeat the process! (Laughter.) Well, don't you? So, yes, that analysis into these five stages does seem broadly to correspond to the facts of life in these sort of situations.

Barry: These sort of happenings can lead to Insight sometimes as well, can't they?

S.: Oh yes, they can. Very much so. In fact, very often there is a sort of Insight experience that you keep gaining and then losing, gaining and then losing; you can see it sort of coming and going, coming and going. Usually, of course, in the end it just goes. But when you are in that very crucial situation, you can have some quite extraordinarily ambivalent experiences.

Barry: How do you mean, ambivalent?

S.: Well, for instance just to go back to the example I mentioned you might be ... shocked to hear that your wife, or girl friend as the case may be, is going to leave you, but that might alternate momentarily with a feeling of relief at the same time. Strange to say, one instant you are really devastated that she is thinking of leaving you, but the next instant you can, in a strange sort of way, feel quite relieved and quite free. I assume most of you have gone through all these experiences? It might be that you haven't examined your experiences very closely or looked into what is happening very closely. But ambivalence is very often, I think, the characteristic of intense experiences, in the sense that two experiences of a quite different nature, or apparently quite different nature, seem to alternate. And in much the same way, yes, you experience your attachment, your clinging, so strongly that you can also experience, or at least see, the alternative to that. So if that sort of experience does befall you, it can be quite valuable, if you are prepared to look at it and try to understand it, or even penetrate into it more deeply; it can be the occasion of the arising of a measure of Insight.

Bram: Bhante, can we expect that if our spiritual practice [were] advanced, it would reflect these five stages?

S.: Well, presumably they would, because in what would your advanced spiritual practice and experience consist? Among other things, you would in any case have faced up to the fact of death and transitoriness; you would have learned to accept those things, at least in principle, so that when you are actually confronted by an experience of that sort, you are relatively prepared. The shock, if there is any shock, is cushioned, as it were. But, even so, there is always a great deal of difference between theory and practice. That is the time of testing, as it were.

Gerry: Earlier on, about two or three days ago, we were talking about crisis, and you said

sometimes the best thing you can do is just to sit with it. In a case such as this, is there anything more that one can do?

S.: Well, in a case such as this you have no alternative. You might not want to sit with it, but it sits with you. Maybe, to begin with, you can't do anything; you feel sort of stunned, you feel numbed, but you gradually adjust, and if you have any sort of spiritual background you begin to adopt a more positive attitude to whatever it is has happened or is going to happen.

[147]

Gerry: These five stages came up in relation to a talk I gave, about my last three years since being in Tuscany before, and I was very interested in it. The thing I wanted to know was er do people necessarily have to go through things like that, from time to time?

S.: You mean things like death? (Laughter.)

Gerry: I remember talking to Prakasha, and he tended to see spiritual life in terms of a progression through a spiral from ever joyful to ever joyful. But I tend to experience it the other way: it's just hassle. You put yourself in the line of more and more hassle. It doesn't necessarily have to be either way... Is there something about people's personality that means that happens to them in one way rather than another?

S.: I must say that I have noticed, in the course of my contact with people, not only within the context of the Friends but long, long before that, that some people do have a much more difficult time than others, and sometimes it is difficult to see why. Sometimes it is as though they just give themselves a more difficult time; but sometimes it seems almost as though fate is giving them a more difficult time, though of course, as a Buddhist one construes that in terms of karma one's own past karma. I have met people, for instance, to whom all sorts of extraordinary things would happen, all sorts of misfortunes and misadventures. You could rely on something going wrong, seriously wrong, drastically wrong, dramatically wrong, where they were concerned, always. It would never happen to other people it certainly didn't seem to happen to me but it always happened to them. It was really as though fate was picking on them all the time; they always had a difficult time. I came to the conclusion, as a Buddhist, that the explanation must have resided in karmas that they had committed in the past, the results of which they were now reaping. I could think of no other explanation than that; perhaps there was a God up in heaven, but a malevolent one, not a kindly one; not a benevolent one, but a really malevolent one, who really was picking on them just for the hell of it! (Their hell, of course.) But, not believing in God, I couldn't really take that alternative, or that possibility, very seriously, so I had to fall back on karma; but I could not ignore the fact, as it were, the fact, that certain people due, apparently, to no fault of their own did have a more difficult time. But, again, one spoke about this question of the spiral of ever more and more blissful experiences; that, in a sense, can be going on at the same time, because the misfortunes that do befall you are external to you, they come from outside. And they can coexist with an increasingly blissful inner experience, and you are less and less disturbed by the things that happen to you. We do know that exactly the same thing can happen to two quite different people, and they will react in completely different ways. One will be really upset and depressed, and the other will just carry on as usual and not bother particularly, and be no less happy than usual, despite what has happened. So the difficult external situation is not necessarily incompatible with the increasingly positive inner experience. That is the test, in a way. If you are going to be cast down whenever some little misfortune happens to you,

what hope do you have of any real spiritual development? Because these little misfortunes are going to happen all the time, especially as you get older at least you will start getting older, and then you will have to start looking forward to death. And most people don't regard that as particularly pleasant. And if you are not careful, that sort of thought or that idea will start bringing you down, casting you down, which it shouldn't. There is always something to cast you down, if you look around, even if it's only the weather. But I think an overall positive experience of life can include, can incorporate, quite a lot in the way of misfortune, and even pain and suffering; because one does know that there are people who have a very positive attitude towards life, [146] who seem, in a way, happy, and who would tell you that they had had a happy life; but one might have thought, looking at their life from the outside, that they had had a very difficult, very hard life, a very miserable life; but they don't feel it, they don't experience it like that. And the converse is also true.

Dhammarati: Looking at it from Gerry's point of view, leaving aside external difficulties and acts of God, it is too simple to see it just that, to the extent that you resist change it is going to be difficult and to the extent that you don't it's going to be pleasurable. That is a too simplistic way of looking at it.

S.: Say it again?

Dhammarati: Thinking about Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's things, it seems to be if it's difficult up to the time that you accept, as long as you are resisting it seems to be painful, but as soon as you stop resisting and start to cooperate it stops being painful. Is that too simplistic a view?

S.: I think in a way it is. I think it applies to a great extent to things that happen to you as it were externally, but what about inner stress? What about inner trauma? For instance, I do know, within the context of the FWBO, quite a lot of people who undergo quite painful experiences which seem to have their source in things that happened to them in early childhood. So it isn't, in such cases, just a simple question of accepting or not resisting. In a way, they do accept, they acknowledge that that is what happened to them, but it still takes a very long time to work out all those things or work through those things, and come to the point where you are not suffering the aftereffects of those events or those experiences any more.

Gerry: Going back again to the crisis: could you alleviate or speed up the process by increased practice?

S.: Hm. I think one might say that increased practice is almost bound to speed things up, because most people have things as it were lurking beneath the surface, which sooner or later have to be brought out into the open and dealt with, and I think intensive practice will bring those things out into the open more quickly than would otherwise have happened; as when, for instance, you go away on a solitary retreat a genuinely solitary retreat. I think, in this respect, much more is likely to happen or, in the popular phrase, 'come up', than when you are working in the coop or just associating with your friends. So if you are practising more intensively you must be prepared in a way for more, not exactly reactions, but the emergence of various factors which need to be dealt with.

Gerry: What about friendship? Gampopa didn't mention the supportive nature of friendship or rather the helpful nature of it. Say somebody is having a really hard time, what can his friends

do about it?

S.: They can help you try to put it in context. They can help you not to indulge in self-pity. You should not expect too much comfort from your spiritual friends in situations of that sort. They can remind you that you are not the only one who has gone through things of that sort; no one has picked on you, it is part of the human predicament. And yes, they can help you to see your experiences in a broader and more positive context. They can certainly help in that way, so that you don't perhaps succumb to despair or anything of that sort, or give up your practice. But they shouldn't sympathize too much. I sometimes say that too much sympathy is weakening: certainly the sort of sympathy which is, in effect, an encouragement to feel self-pity that is weakening. Don't feel too sorry for yourself.

Chairman: The next question comes from Steve.

[149]

Steve: As a result of the five factors which Dharmadhara has mentioned, I thought of more subtle forms of that, in terms of somebody experiencing a recurring image arising from perhaps the traumatic death of a close friend or a beloved. What do you suggest that we could do in helping that person overcome something like that? dealing with anger and denial, a bit more directly?

S.: It is not easy to generalize. One really needs to know the person. But if someone is experiencing a recurrent image of that sort it means there is unfinished business, whether in connection with the death or something else, and you have to help them clear up that unfinished business. They haven't come to terms with the situation, so the image keeps recurring. In a way, it is a good thing it does keep on recurring, because it is a constant reminder that there is unfinished business to be cleared up at least, the image hasn't sunk as it were to an unconscious level where you are not in a position to deal with it so easily. So in a way it is good that you get this recurrent image. But the spiritual friends can only help, I think, to the extent of helping the person concerned to connect the image with the experience that it really refers to, and then dealing with that, coming to terms with that; but exactly how one does that, in the case of any particular person, will depend very much on the nature of that person their history, their temperament, their degree of spiritual development, their general situation, and so on. It will also depend, to some extent, on your own personal capacities and resources. So it isn't easy to generalize. But no doubt something can be done to help in such cases. It is as though one has to try to help the person, you just follow back the clue that is provided by that recurrent image, follow it back to the situation that it is connected with or that gave rise to it; explore the significance of that and try to come to terms with it all; see it more clearly or within a broader context.

Steve: So it is a matter, quite often, of keeping it on the boil, as it were, and not allowing the person to push it away? It has almost got to be directly contacted?

S.: If the image is spontaneously recurrent, his own mind, so to speak, is doing that for him; but he could, even so, learn to suppress that image, and then there might be other, subtler symptoms which would be more difficult to deal with. Someone might have a recurrent nightmare related to some experience early in life; one could explore the significance of that nightmare, that dream. But in this field it isn't easy to generalize, because experiences are so personal to those concerned.

Prasannasiddhi: Presumably, in this instance, Bhante, if the person wasn't willing to develop spiritually, in a way there would be nothing you could do about it?

S.: That's true; because, for instance, in the case of death, if you are not willing to accept the fact of death, whether your own or somebody else's and acceptance, real acceptance, is only possible within the context of some kind of philosophy of life, of a more spiritual nature then all you can do is just try to forget, in one way or another; which is what people usually do. They don't really learn from the experience. Sometimes people say: 'What can one do? The best thing is just to forget as soon as one can.' One way of forgetting, in the case of certain situations, is to repeat the pattern again.

Chairman: The next question comes from Vessantara.

Vessantara: I think it's been answered.

S.: How are we getting on rather quickly, or ?

[150]

Chairman: Yes, just a little bit quickly! But the next section will take us a bit longer. We've got two questions on art.

S.: That's a big jump, isn't it? The medical art, or ?

Chairman: That comes from Ray.

Ray: Bhante, in our group we were discussing the lives of artists. The names of Cellini and Caravaggio were cited as examples of artists who had led rather unethical lives. I have two questions pertaining to this, and a third question which is more ...

1) Do you think that an artist's work can be seen as separate from his life that is, do great works of art exist on their own, separately from the life of the artist?

2) Can a great work of art be created by an artist leading an unethical life?

3) In your book, *The Religion of Art*, you don't give many examples of supreme artistic achievement. Could you give some?

S.: Let's have those questions one by one. I don't know how you got to this subject, but we won't go into that!

Ray: Quite easily, really! (1) Do you think an artist's work can be seen as separate from his life?

S.: You can see it as separate, but is it really separate, or in what sense is it separate? Once an artist has, for instance, carved a statue, the statue is apart from him; the statue thereafter has its own history, he has his own history. But can you really see that statue as something existing separately from his experience, his way of looking at things? Do you see what I mean? You can't separate it in that way; you can't see it as separate in that way, surely. I know that, in aesthetics, there is such a thing as Expressionism, which is not, I believe, very much

in favour at the moment; but leaving that aside and just adopting a purely commonsense point of view, you cannot divorce the work of art from the man who produced it, from the experience of the man who produced it. That is not to say that the work of art is to be interpreted entirely in terms of the experience of the man who produced it, but that experience can't be ignored; it is surely relevant to some degree to the production of the work of art, or to the work of art as such. That just seems to be a matter of common sense. Let's see if any of the artists present I think there are one or two present have anything to say about that; whether they are prepared to fly in the face of common sense.

Chairman: I think Prasannasiddhi was first. I am not sure whether he regards himself as an artist!

Prasannasiddhi: I think in the group we had in mind, say, an artist who well, that anyone's life can be quite varied, at some moments you have quite negative experiences but at other times you have quite positive experiences. So therefore you could at one time be in a very good state, produce a work of art, and three years later you could be in a dreadful state.

S.: That's true; actually you're jumping the gun a bit, because we were going stage by stage. What you said is quite correct, but I am going to come to that in a minute. I'm supposed to be answering the questions, not you! You can take over in a few years' time! So what was the second one?

[151]

Ray: Can a great work of art be created by an artist leading an unethical life?

S.: Well, yes, what Prasannasiddhi has just said [is] part of my answer. I was going to preface it by saying something that he didn't say: that human beings are very complex beings, very complex creatures. They are not necessarily very highly integrated. Cellini was a dreadful person, really. I don't know if any of you have read his Autobiography perhaps some of you have. I believe there is a copy of it somewhere around Il Convento; there was in previous years, anyway. But he was a dreadful person, he seems to have had no ethical sense at all. He was a real desperado, a sort of gangster, one might say, at times. But he did produce some very beautiful works of art; so what was his state of mind when he produced those works of art? It was probably somewhat different from his state of mind when, for instance, he killed somebody because he did, I believe, more than once, kill somebody. We know from our own experience that at one moment, almost one part of the day we can be in the shrine room radiating thoughts of metta, but maybe a couple of hours later we are in a really murderous state of mind. So we can change like that, and I think probably you can account for the fact that a man like Cellini, who led at times such a very unethical life though he did have his good points; he was very loyal to his friends, for instance could at other times create really beautiful works of art. But I would go further and say that I do believe that the very greatest works of art are created by relatively more integrated people, and that the very greatest works of art do give expression to insights which, I think almost always, have a definitely ethical basis that is to say, an ethical basis in the life of the artist. Which is not to say (this is another point) that the artist is necessarily ethical in the conventional sense. I think you have to be very careful to distinguish between what Buddhists would call conventional ethics and what Buddhists would call natural ethics. In the Victorian period, say, a poet who lived with a woman to whom he wasn't legally married would be considered as in living in sin and leading an immoral life and being an immoral person, but we can't possibly see it in that way, because

the relationship between the two people might have been a completely sound one, a completely ethical one notwithstanding the absence of legality. So we have to be quite clear what we mean by morality, what we mean by immorality, in this particular connection. What was the third question?

Tape 14, Side 2

Ray: ...I found in some cases an artist's talent could be actually greater than his lifestyle, for instance; almost as if the artist couldn't help producing great works of art with the talent he had, despite the type of life that he [led].

S.: Again, I think we have to be more specific look at what one meant by the type of life, and look at the actual works of art. So again, in this field, too, it is difficult to generalize, especially if one generalizes on the basis of very little in the way of actual concrete facts or evidence.

Ray: The third part of the question was: In your book, *The Religion of Art*, you don't give many examples of supreme artistic achievement. I wondered if you could cite some now.

S.: I am familiar, of course, most with the field of literature, perhaps. I would regard, say, *Paradise Lost* as a supreme achievement. I would regard the greatest of the tragedies of Shakespeare as a supreme achievement. I think I would regard *Don Quixote* as a supreme achievement; possibly Goethe's *Faust* though I wouldn't put, say, Goethe's *Faust* in the same bracket as *Paradise Lost*, because it doesn't have the same artistic unity, the same unity of design. Perhaps that wasn't possible any longer in Goethe's day. I would include definitely Dante's *Divine [152] Comedy*. Those are a few examples from literature. In the [visual] arts, I am not so sure; because in the arts it is as though you need to take perhaps (I am not too sure of this) not one particular painting but perhaps a number of paintings as it were together though perhaps if one did have to mention one great work, significantly it would be, perhaps, a composite work, a painting made up of many paintings; and I think that would be Michelangelo's ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. I am not so sure about the fresco at the far end, the 'Last Judgement', but certainly the paintings in the ceiling, representing the Creation and so on, with the sibyls and all those other figures. Music? Of course, music there are many examples there one could mention. Mozart's last three symphonies and several piano concertos. One could mention almost any of Handel's great operas; I am not so sure about the oratorios, but certainly the operas.

: Bach?

S.: Of course, one would have to mention Bach! The question is, what would one mention? So these are works that I would regard as supreme works of art, and you notice that they are all large-scale; they are all solid, they are all substantial and they are all products of men of very great attainments, very great achievements in many ways, men who devoted their lives to their art in one way or the other, this form or that. And men who I think, on the whole, were admirable as characters. I think Milton was admirable as a character; Handel was admirable as a character the biography of Handel is a very interesting story indeed. There is a biography by Flower, I think the man's name is I have read a slightly shortened version, but even that is very good indeed; it shows what tremendous strength of character Handel had, a very noble character, one might say, in many ways, constantly struggling with difficulties and setbacks

and obstacles of all kinds, but always coming up on top of everything, as it were; never giving up, never giving way to despair; a man of very, very strong feeling; also with a great capacity for friendship both with men and with women.

: What about Mozart?

S.: I don't know all that much about Mozart, despite that play. We've got his Letters. So much of Mozart seems to have gone into his music, there almost doesn't seem much as it were left over for life, in a way. His life was composing and performing. I know that, as a result of that play what was it called, the wretched thing?

Voices: Amadeus.

S.: Amadeus. I didn't go to see it but I heard enough about it. But from some of the comments I heard, I got the impression that people found it quite difficult perhaps the author of the play found it quite difficult to understand what it was like to be a genius, especially someone like Mozart; what it was like to be a creative personality. I think the author probably didn't realize (this is a guess of mine) that someone who creates in the way that Mozart created lives and works under tremendous pressure, and sometimes they just have to let off steam. I think Mozart's way of letting off steam was just to be childish and play jokes and make childish remarks and just play around. I think that is not an expression of an inherently childish streak in his nature, constituting a severe weakness or imperfection; I would have thought that that was just an expression of the terrible creative tension and pressure that he worked under. Those things represented a sort of little safety valve which he allowed himself, and that seems quite understandable, quite natural, quite acceptable, one might say. Perhaps, in the case of the very greatest people (and perhaps here you have to rise to the [153] level of the saint, way above the artist, even), no such little outlet would be required; but I think many artists painters, writers, musicians need that sort of outlet when they are working in that sort of way, especially when they are creating on a very high level, to the extent that Mozart was. We know that, for instance, Beethoven used to work under tremendous pressure, perhaps even greater than that under which Mozart worked; but Beethoven just let off steam in the form of bad temper, which apparently Mozart didn't do. And when we come to Wagner he just let off steam by being thoroughly unpleasant to everybody with whom he came in contact! So, in comparison with that, Mozart's harmless childishness seems very understandable, and even acceptable. And if he did use naughty words occasionally, so what? He seems to have used them in a way that a child uses them.

Dhammarati: Going back a couple of steps, where you said about comparison between Paradise Lost and Faust you said Faust you wouldn't rate as high as Paradise Lost because it didn't have the same unity of design. And something that ... that aspect, we've talked about the ethics of the artist and the base in ethics ..., but it seems quite independent of that. You've got the sensitivity to, let's say, ...pression ... and something that has always struck me ... most intelligent people and with the people that say the most profound things are also generally people who control the form best and the way they use their time, the way they use their colour, the way they use their shapes; this is very refined. And the two kinds of intelligence: on the one hand the intellectual, the man of more ability(?) seems very often to go hand in hand with, like, that's the best work, and I just wondered if you would say anything about the connection between the two. You get the ... ethically very worthy whose art is dead, you get the technically very good who are not ethically based but based on at least two of those, and I

don't understand the connection.

S.: I wouldn't say that the best art is that which combines those two elements well, maybe the best, but the greatest art I believe includes a spiritual element, some element of a vision which, as I said, presupposes at least to some extent an ethical basis in the life of the person concerned. I think, in the case of artistic form and artistic unity, there are two things to be considered. One is the nature of the material: the material may be very rich and very complex; it certainly was in the case of Goethe's Faust, especially Part II. Secondly, there was the artist's capacity to give form to his material. That capacity may be greater or it may be less. In the case of Milton, he had an extraordinarily rich material nothing less than the whole of Christian and classical culture and history but he had also a tremendous capacity for giving artistic shape and form to the material. So he was able to produce something like Paradise Lost. In a way, perhaps, Goethe had even richer material, because the whole of the modern world, virtually, had come into existence by his time, and he had to cope with that too; and perhaps he did not have it is almost certain he didn't have Milton's capacity for imposing form on his material. We know that Goethe, for instance, left a lot of works unfinished; he was always beginning things and being unable to finish them. So perhaps that was an expression of his difficulty. Nonetheless, he did finish Faust; he finished it when he was way on in his 80s, having begun Part I at least when he was in his 20s. It was worked on over a period of 50 years. Milton finished Paradise Lost, as far as we know, in about six years, five or six years; which was quite an achievement. So, as I say, there are two things to consider here. One, the richness of the material; and then the artist's capacity to impose form on that material. And the richer the material, the more difficult to impose an overall form. 'Impose' is not quite the right word here, but you probably know what I mean. If you are writing a sonnet, it is not very difficult to impose form; in any case, the form is given by tradition. But if you are working on a much bigger scale, it is not nearly so easy to impose an artistic form.

[154]

Dhammarati: Do you think the two things are imperatives ... independent of each other or is there some connection between the depth of insight and

S.: I think they can function independently, because sometimes you get form without much in the way of content, and sometimes you get a lot of very rich content, but hardly any form. Clearly, the artist has not been able to impose form to a sufficient degree on his material. So, yes, it does seem that they can function separately. Dante is another excellent example of great richness of material and beautiful artistic form.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, would you consider that any of the other English poets I was thinking of the Romantic poets could be classed in the category of supreme artistic achievement? And also, any novelists, English or even perhaps European?

S.: Perhaps here I am being invited to indulge in my own preferences, but why not? I think they can be justified to some extent, at least. So say that again?

Prasannasiddhi: Would you consider that any other English poets, particularly with reference to the Romantic poets, could be classed in the category of supreme artistic achievement or ?

S.: Ah. I think the Romantics do fall down a bit here, if one thinks in terms of supreme artistic achievement. I think they were very often relatively formless, relatively shapeless. If

you think, for instance, of Prometheus Unbound, it is a magnificent work, but then that last act was sort of tacked on afterwards. It is not really a fully organic unity; though some might dispute that. And then, well, think of Endymion well, there is no artistic unity there at all; it is a bit of a mess, actually. It contains some wonderful poetry, but taken as a complete work of art it is sadly deficient. Byron? Well, yes, no supreme work of art; Don Juan is a great poem but it is unfinished, after all, and it is sort of episodic; and whether something that is essentially episodic can really have overall artistic shape and form is very much in question. Who else was there?

Prasannasiddhi: Wordsworth.

S.: Wordsworth? Well, The Prelude which is his greatest work, no doubt is only a 'prelude' to a larger work which he never was able to complete. So, if you want to be strict, there is no artistic unity there; you have only got a gigantic sort of portico to the building, of which this is somebody else's metaphor he completed the odd chapel here and there but never really got round to finishing the whole structure. I think nonetheless you probably could regard The Prelude as complete in itself, but it certainly doesn't have the artistic unity, say, of Paradise Lost, and it has got some very flat passages, admittedly; it is pretty rough in parts. But, again, from time to time it really rises to the heights. As regards Coleridge, there is nothing on any scale. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner that is perfect of its kind, one might say, but it is a relatively small-scale work; it is one of the finest English poems, certainly of that length, and, yes, it does have definite artistic unity, and great beauty throughout; but I don't think it could be classified as a supreme work of art on the level of, say, Paradise Lost, because scale and complexity come into it, too. Who else have we got?

Prasannasiddhi: Blake.

S.: Well, when it is a question of artistic unity, Blake falls down with a great big bump, doesn't he? But again there are one or two people who dispute that and say the unity was of another nature; but I think that is stretching it a bit. In the case of, say, Keats, there are small-scale works which do have a perfect [155] unity: the Odes, for instance, most of them; but again they can't be compared with the large-scale works. What about the novels? I don't know all that much about fiction. I have read most of the Victorian classics, I think, but 'supreme'? Most people would say the supreme work of art in the field of the novel is War and Peace, though some would say The Brothers Karamazov. I think probably one would have to agree it was between those two, though there are a number of others that come not very far behind. But 'supreme' 'supreme' is quite a big word. There are some which are excellent, but supreme? Some people might put some of George Eliot's, but I think she is a bit heavy; she has elements of heaviness which you don't find in the earlier works, but then the earlier works are comparatively small-scale; the large-scale works seem to contain a bit of undigested material. One sometimes wishes that she hadn't lived with a man who knew so much about science, because she keeps putting lumps of out-of-date science here and there in the text of her work, which are no longer of any great interest. Wuthering Heights? It is a long time since I have read Wuthering Heights; I suspect it could be put in that category. I am not sure, I would have to reread it. It is more than 20 years since I read it.

Dhammarati: ...Two questions here. It is an interesting point that no woman has appeared on the list of supreme artistic achievement.

S.: Wuthering Heights.

: So you would include that?

S.: Well, I might. As I say, it is more than 20 years since I read it, so my recollection of it isn't very vivid; but it is usually put among perhaps the half dozen greatest novels in English.

: Well, I'll replace it inasmuch as it is in a quite significant minority of the list. I was wondering if you think that women are generally less evolved (laughter) or whether you would agree with the feminist viewpoint that perhaps it is conditioning that stunts woman's creativity? The other question was: would you consider there are supreme artistic achievements within the context of Chinese, Islamic and Indian and Tibetan civilization and culture?

S.: Let's take those one by one. I might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb! What was the first one?

: Whether you think that the fact that so few women seem capable of supreme artistic achievement reflects their lack of evolution or, as the feminists would say, the few opportunities for development?

S.: I suppose there is no way of demonstrating it scientifically one way or the other, but I can't help feeling it is a bit suspicious that women have produced so little of the first class in the course of all these centuries, whereas they have done quite a bit of writing, quite a bit of painting and so on. Nonetheless, I am quite prepared to leave it an open question and to admit that maybe women have not had the opportunity; in which case they are getting more and more opportunities now, so let's just wait and see; let's give them a few centuries, with all the opportunities that they do have, and just see whether there is any supreme work of art created, whether in the field of literature or the visual arts, by a woman. But I can't help feeling, none the less, that it is a little odd that they have not done better if they had really been able to. But anyway, let's wait and see. 'Us' is the collective 'us', because it won't be me; I don't suppose much will happen in the course of the few years I have got left, perhaps, and maybe even [156] none of you will see very much, but who knows in the future? It is difficult to say. Perhaps one need not be too dogmatic either way. I am willing to give the ladies a chance. Of course, there are certainly some very good women writers around, but they fall short of greatness, to the best of my knowledge. But perhaps where are the great men writers, anyway, nowadays? That question also could be asked.

What was the second question?

: Whether you think that supreme artistic achievements have come out of specifically Chinese, Islamic, Indian and Tibetan culture and civilization?

S.: I certainly think supreme artistic achievements have come out of Islamic civilization and culture. Just to go off that for a moment: I didn't mention anything Byzantine, did I? I would like to mention, in terms of architecture, the Santa Sophia in Istanbul, and you will see the connection, or at least the association... the Taj Mahal, in India. If one is thinking in terms of architecture or ..., there is also the Parthenon in Athens. I think there are quite a number of supreme artistic achievements in the field of architecture. think, within the field of Islamic

civilization and culture, there are many instances of this sort mosques and palaces and forts. Literature? Persia has a vast poetic output; whether there is anything absolutely supreme and on a large scale it is difficult to say. Persia has a very large number of very great poets, but they are not very well known; I have read only a few translations. I find it difficult to say. I suspect that there are very few, if any, large-scale works with the sort of artistic unity that I have in mind, but there are many, no doubt, small-scale works or collections of small-scale works, like the Odes of Hafiz and so on. The Muslims, one must remember, regard the Koran itself as the greatest of all works of art. China again, there are collections of small works which are perfect of their kind, but there seems to be very little on the large scale. Maybe there are some buildings. There are collections of odes. Chinese poems tend to be very short; they have no epics, they have no poetic drama. The Arabs have no poetic drama, the Persians until modern times have no poetic drama, though they had the epic. And, of course, until recently, there was not much in the way of fiction.

: So, even in terms of, say, art Chinese brush painting, stuff like that?

S.: But then again you have got small single works. It is difficult, say, to compare, say, a Chinese brush painting with, say, the ceiling of the Sistine chapel. You are not really comparing the same kind of things. The Chinese one could imagine, say, the Chinese taking a quite different point of view and saying that intensity and simplicity are of greater importance. That is possible.

T : And what of the Tibetans? Do you think that they have produced anything of supreme artistic achievement?

S.: I don't think so. (Laughter.) They have translated a lot that is of value from India. They have been subject also to cultural influences from China, from Central Asia, but could you point, say, to a single Tibetan building or work of literature that took its place side by side with Paradise Lost or, say, with the poems of the great Persian or Chinese poets?

T : What about the Songs of Milarepa?

S.: From a purely literary point of view? No, I don't think they quite achieve that level; the spiritual content, yes, it's tremendous, but as literature.

[157]

T : But is there a point where the spiritual actually begins to count in terms of the supreme artistic achievement?

S.: Well, as I have said, I don't think there can be a supreme work of art without a very definite spiritual content; but spiritual content by itself does not make a supreme work of art. You could have a spiritual content of tremendous value, but nonetheless very little in the way of artistic form. But no doubt the Songs of Milarepa I would even say that ...'s Life of Milarepa stands very high indeed in Tibetan literature, from a purely literary point of view. I don't know that I have come across anything better.

Dhammarati: ... Japanese work ... scale, it's a question of whether you get this picture, where the painter [goes] simplify simplify simplify, one single brush-stroke made beautifully with beautifully ground ink and beautiful paper; it's quite a different kind of work from the Sistine

Chapel. It seems so

S.: But I think in Western painting you can get the beautiful brush-stroke, the beautiful brushwork, incorporated into the larger-scale work of art. Think of Rembrandt, for instance.

Dhammarati: The main question association of ideas thinking about the Romantics, how it was the whole period, perhaps, that was less productive than other periods were, making me wonder how much the

S.: Well, a lot of them died young.

Dhammarati: Yes. The big thing was how much the social conditions, philosophical ideas and culture

S.: Yes, indeed.

Dhammarati: ... standards of culture. And the next question I come to is: if Western Christian culture has produced such good work, like Handel's religious work, Bach's religious work, ..., does that speak highly of Christianity, as a support for that kind of ... ?

S.: I think not necessarily; because at the time of the Renaissance you had, say, the Italian artists treating the traditional themes of Christian art in a very free way, and in a sense introducing their own view of the world, even their own vision of things, which departed to some extent from the traditional Christian vision. Western art was not necessarily at its greatest when faith was at its strongest. No doubt when faith was at its strongest there was something which subsequently was lost; it is as though, in the early Renaissance, just for a while, there was a balance between a definitely pure religious feeling and technical accomplishment; but later on, the spiritual feeling seems to have dwindled and the technical accomplishment have gone on increasing; feeling seems to have become coarser and to have become vulgarized, almost.

Dhammarati: And with Milton?

S.: Well, literature seems to have lagged behind painting, in the sense that it developed later. In the case of Milton, there is very great refinement of feeling as well as sense of form; though most critics would say that Dante has greater intensity of feeling, greater concentration of effect. This is perhaps true. But then he has a much tighter sort of structure. In some ways, his structure is not so artistic as Milton's because he is somewhat artificial. There is Hell, there is Purgatory, there is Heaven, and each of those parts is divided into, what is it, 33 [158] cantos? so you have got 99 altogether; so it is a quite tight artificial structure, which works very well. Milton's is not artificial in that way. "Nonetheless, within his very tight framework, Dante achieves tremendous intensity and concentration. So does Milton, in a different way.

Dhammarati: Is there a general relationship between the quality of the society, if you like, and the quality of the art?

S.: Oh, I think that is very difficult to say; because look at the times in which Dante wrote and lived. Look at the wars that were going on between the different Italian cities, factions within

the cities; look at the state of affairs within Florence. Dante himself was exiled and threatened with death. Milton lived all through the Civil War! And he had to go into hiding when King Charles came back, and his life was in danger for a while. He lived through all that; he was deeply involved in politics. He certainly didn't have a quiet life. Goethe had a much quieter life! But no doubt Goethe had, in some ways, a more difficult situation to deal with, in the sense that, by his time, the Christian synthesis, as we may call it, had broken down. In Milton's time, it had not broken down; it had begun to break down but it hadn't really broken down. It was still valid for the majority of people. The majority of people still believed in Adam and Eve and the Fall of Man, in a quite literal sense, but when Goethe came to write the second part of Faust, at the end he quite deliberately chose themes from as it were Christian mythology, even though he knew the majority of people no longer believed in them, no longer took them literally; but he chose them for their artistic effect. A very different sort of approach. Anyway, perhaps I should warn you that the views I have expressed in the course of the last half-hour, though I believe in them quite strongly, I think, would probably be regarded as highly controversial by most modern literary critics. I think they would see things in quite another way. I think they are wrong, of course! But I should warn you that my way of looking at things is more or less peculiar to myself, as far as I know at the moment. No, I think a few people would agree with me, but they are not perhaps the best-known. Perhaps some of the people who agree with me would be found writing in the pages of what's that magazine?

: Tenemos.

S.: Tenemos, yes; taking a more traditional view of the arts. Not traditional in the sense of old-fashioned, but in the sense of believing that art, to be truly art, certainly to be great art, needs a background or a basis of spiritual values.

Chairman: A final one on this [subject].

Prasannasiddhi: As far as I understood, the term 'supreme artistic achievement' comes from a lecture on 'Art and the Spiritual Life' that is part of the Higher Evolution series.

S.: Ah. I wasn't consciously quoting, but that is quite possible.

Prasannasiddhi: And I think it referred to the stage on the scale of evolution from the emergence of Individuality up until Enlightenment; in which case, that would refer to a much broader range, I would have thought, of artists than those you have stated.

S.: Yes, in that lecture I probably used the term in a somewhat broader sense than I have used it this evening. But this evening I am being very selective, or very exclusive. Also one must consider that one doesn't have much time for reading; one might as well read just the best. Why waste one's time reading [159] literature of little value? Again, this is where a lot of contemporary critics would disagree with me: they would say, I think, that it is important to read, say, contemporary novels, however poor they are though they might not agree that they were poor but they reflect contemporary life, and you are part of contemporary life. I would not go along with that sort of argument.

Barry: Bhante, you mentioned a while back about how artists working on their own are very highly pressured and need to let off steam. What is the nature of that very high pressure they

work under? Why do they ?

S.: Well, first of all there is the question of concentration. You have to be intensely concentrated, because you

Tape 15, Side 1 You have to be intensely concentrated to produce a work of art. And then, what is going into the work of art? Your feelings are going into the work of art; and, at the moment of creation, you may experience your feelings very, very intensely, very powerfully; they may come welling up from the depths quite uncontrollably. There is a very fine description by Nietzsche of this process. And if anything gets in your way, or if there is any sort of interruption or disturbance, you can react quite violently to that, just because you are so absorbed in what you are actually doing. You are also bringing together into a unity a whole mass of materials; you are bringing them into a unity by virtue of the intensity of your experience and your feelings, or even of your Insight, and very great what I call psychic pressure is needed to do that. There is one quite famous description of the way Milton worked, in terms of Milton's artistic inspiration being like a great furnace which he sort of banked up and banked up until it was just a mass of glowing coals, and into that furnace he flung all sorts of things his knowledge, all the materials he had gathered but the heat of the furnace of his imagination was such that he could melt and smelt all those materials, and he could cast them into a form of his own, into a mould of his own. That is the general nature of the process. This is why often artists and writers have to go away on their own, where they can be free from interruption. Handel, when he was composing, used to compose very rapidly, in a white heat as it were; he would often compose an opera or an oratorio in three to five weeks the whole thing and his operas can last five hours, some of them! And he would shout and laugh, and walk up and down the room, and sing aloud and then bang on the piano, and he would keep it up all day, day after day, just snatching a little sleep at night he was so carried away by what he was doing. I believe Messiah was composed in three weeks. So to be able to do that one must be working at an incredible pitch of emotional intensity and, for want of a better term, inspiration.

Barry: I was trying to compare it with the dhyanas; you may have that sort of experience of inspiration, but [it's not a] matter of having to let off steam after a good meditation!

S.: Well, usually, you have worked your way up to it pretty gradually. But I think perhaps we get a wrong idea, sometimes, about dhyanas, especially about the second dhyana that it is a pleasant little state with a little bit of inspiration wells up in the midst of it. Yes, maybe that is a good start, but no doubt inspiration can come from even greater depths, and may affect you more as it were dramatically. I think, in the case of the artist, very often there is a lot in his life that is not in accordance with his inspiration, so there is a certain conflict, a certain tension, between them. Whereas in the case of the person who is meditating, he has prepared the ground by means of an ethical life to a very much greater extent.

Chairman: Mike has got the next point.

[160]

Mike: Bhante, I was wondering from the point of view of spiritual values ... who is actually better: somebody like Cellini, who at one moment will produce a very beautiful work of art and at the next perhaps kills somebody; or the ordinary man in the street, so to speak, who never comes close to either of those experiences?

S.: It is very difficult to say, isn't it? One doesn't like to say that a man who has, say, killed somebody is in a better position, in a way. But maybe in the case of human beings your potential is a sort of double-edged weapon, at least until you reach the point of Stream Entry. As soon as you develop self-consciousness, you can use that faculty for good or for evil. So, in a sense, you are in a better position, in the sense that you have, so to speak, a choice between good and evil; but you are not necessarily in a better position if you proceed to choose the worse alternative. You can put the question in a more extreme form: is it good to be, say, a cow who doesn't commit any crime, who just eats grass in a harmless and nonviolent manner; or a human being who is capable of committing a crime, or perhaps has committed a crime? Which is better, to be the cow or to be the human being even the human being who has committed the crime? You could even put it in a more extreme form: is it better to be a sinful human being or a sinless earthworm? The higher you go in the scale of evolution, at the same time in a way not only do the possibilities for good increase but the possibilities for evil increase too.

Barry: Does that mean that somebody who has great potential for gaining Insight

S.: Well, someone like Cellini seems to have a wider range of possibilities open to him. Whether the possibility of Insight was among them, I don't know. I rather doubt it, having read his Autobiography. I think he was too divided. He was a very extreme case, one might say.

Gerry: With reference to these great bursts of creativity that the artist would feel, have you ever felt anything like that? I was thinking ... the Survey that you were sort of overtaken by passion ...

S.: It took me 14 months to write the Survey, and I helped somebody else write a quite lengthy chapter of a book in between, and I believe I had a couple of lecture tours too. So I think, as far as I remember, I did write that under a certain amount of as it were emotional pressure. I remember that I had no difficulty whatever writing it; I used to write it whenever I could, at odd times during the day. I had no difficulty at all getting down to it. I don't think I can write like that now. It might have been something to do with my age; it might have been something to do with the fact that I had very few distractions and very few responsibilities. Also, it was my first big literary work, and there was a lot that I wanted to say; and I really welcomed the opportunity of saying it.

Gerry: One thing and I ... if you'll pardon me saying, in the new edition you have two introductions: one that you wrote at Padmaloka a few years ago, and one about 10 years before. And the thing that struck me was the stylistic difference. I must say I

S.: That may well be, but that would be something that other people, perhaps, will notice more than I notice myself. Others have made that comment before. I suppose that is understandable: that, as one gets older, one's style changes. I think probably my style now is more condensed. I try to say much more in fewer words. I think that difference is noticeable as between the Survey and The Three Jewels. Why this should be, I find it difficult to say.

[161]

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, to go back to the supreme artistic achievement: I was just thinking of three other ...s, if you like: Shakespeare, the Greek tragedians, and Plato. Would you class any

of those?

S.: Yes, I hadn't thought of the philosophers as such; but, yes, though it isn't all that long, I have thought for many, many years that probably the Symposium was among the supreme artistic achievements despite its relative shortness but with regard to its form it is an incredibly beautiful work. And of course there is the content. I doubt if any of the other Dialogues in respect of form, and I am only speaking of artistic form now quite match the Symposium. There are lots of works I haven't mentioned that some people might, but I have just given a personal selection as far as I can remember. And, of course, concentrating on what I have called the greater works, the works which are on a larger scale.

Chairman: The next question is a different question; it is Prasannasiddhi's, too.

Prasannasiddhi: It is somewhat related in a way. In your lecture on 'Art and the Spiritual Life', you mention the following hierarchy of art: (1) no art, which would include the realm of the animal, (2) folk, tribal or ethnic art, (3) the fine arts, (4) supreme artistic achievement, which is the work of individuals. The second and third categories of this hierarchy cover a very wide spectrum of art. Do you have any further subdivisions to fill out these categories?

S.: I don't think I do at the moment, because I must admit it is years since I have given any thought to this subject. I'll have to give it some thought fairly soon, because I am supposed to be putting together those three or four essays, among them The Religion of Art, and writing a little preface so that they can all be brought out together. But I am afraid there have been so many other things to think about that I have not been able yet to get around even to thinking about it. But it might be that one could subdivide those stages that are, as you say, quite broad, quite comprehensive; but at the moment I have no thoughts on it at all, I am afraid. Perhaps I could comment here that, again, some modern critics would think it quite wrong to compare one work of art with another in this way, because you can't really compare works of art and say that one is better than another. Not that they are all equally good, but that that sort of comparison is just not valid. I would not personally agree with that, but that is a quite common point of view.

Pavel: It seems to me that in many cases there is an emotional tension which leads to the creation of art, somehow connected with lack of integration: a tension between ... [and an un]integrated personality. If such an artist starts to practise meditation and becomes more integrated, perhaps he could lose his artistic creativity.

S.: Yes, this is quite possible. But I think also that, even though artistic creativity of the kind I have mentioned is symptomatic of lack of integration, at the same time the creative process itself is a means of integration at least partial integration. I think that probably, in many cases, the artist is a more integrated person than is the average person.

Pavel: It means that, if the artist has made it his life, he gets integration by art ..., it is not so urgent for him ... to be integrated as an artist.

S.: I am not so sure that it is as simple as that. As I said, I think that artistic creation itself is a means of integration. I also think that we mustn't think that integration is achieved through spiritual life very easily: it is not as [162] though, as soon as we, say, do a little bit of meditation, we at once become so integrated that all dichotomies cease to exist and that

artistic creation has no place. I think perhaps that our conception, and possibly our experience, of meditation is a bit limited, and perhaps this whole question of inner dichotomy and integration is much more radical than we probably thought. In other words, we probably are much less integrated than we think. Perhaps, in the case of the artist, he has come nearer, he has made a closer approach, to genuine integration than most people do. I think you would have to meditate very deeply and very seriously to bring about the sort of integration that some artists, at least, have brought about through their artistic work. We must not think in terms of someone like, say, D.H. Lawrence, to take a well-known example clearly a very unintegrated man, but, yes, he does seem to have achieved a measure of integration through his writing and painting. So it is easy to think, 'Here am I: yes, I am not a great genius like D.H. Lawrence, I don't suffer from his internal conflicts and, yes, I do a bit of meditation; so, yes, I am much more integrated, and therefore I am on a higher level of development than D.H. Lawrence.' I think that would be a very unwise or premature conclusion to come to. Do you see what I mean? Beware of the premature synthesis!

Chairman: The last question is on a totally different theme.

S.: The last one? Oh!

Lalitaratna: It's to do with falling in love, Bhante. When reading Gampopa's line: '...and out of a loving disposition, to gaze at him ever and again with a mind that cannot be satisfied with one look,' I was struck with how useful it might be if we could fall in love with someone or something that would truly help us along the spiritual path. I also thought how pleasant the world can seem during the early stages of falling in love. We have the process of falling in love, and the phenomenon of being in love. (1) Should this process be avoided altogether and our efforts put entirely into developing metta; or, if we are particularly mindful, can something of the phenomenon be put to the service of the spiritual life? There is a second question

S.: Let's deal with this one first. I think it is very difficult to avoid falling in love if you are that way inclined; and of course most people are that way inclined. Supposing you are inclined to fall in love with women: you can keep away from them, you can go and live in a men's community, you can keep your eyes closed when you are travelling by tube but if you are susceptible in that way, you have only just got to see one in the distance for an instant, and you can fall in love like that; or you can just see a picture, or see a painting, and you can fall in love again, just like that. So I don't think really, if you are susceptible in this way, you can escape so easily; I just don't think it's possible. So what should you do, from a spiritual point of view? I think it is not impossible to make a positive use of the experience of falling in love. I think that is not impossible. Well, Plato gives us some guidance there in the Symposium. But I think what is important is that, if one can possibly avoid it, one should not get to know the person with whom one has fallen in love. You should try to dwell on the experience itself, or the feeling itself, and dissociate it from that particular person with whom, after all, it has very little to do! Because, after all, by its very nature, it is projective. I think what usually happens is that, because you are projecting that feeling on to a certain person, or projecting certain qualities on to a certain person and then, as we say, falling in love with that person or with those qualities, you think that there is some inherent [163] connection between those qualities for which you have fallen which are, after all, projected aspects of your own deeper self you think they are necessarily associated with that person, so you want to draw closer to that person and if possible appropriate that person, etc. etc. And what usually

happens in the end is that those qualities cease to be associated with that person, and you fall out of love with that person, because your experience of the person is so different, actually, from your experience of what formerly you projected on to that person. It is such a discrepancy you can't help acknowledging it in the end. Obviously, there are degrees of falling in love; I am speaking about a quite violent experience of falling in love. So the best thing you can do is to try to keep clear of the person you have fallen in love with especially if they are not someone with any spiritual interest or anything of that sort and as it were dwell on your actual feeling and try to develop that, and try to see it more and more clearly as actually having very little to do with that particular person, but as representing a part of yourself, with which the experience has brought you into contact, a part of yourself which you must reclaim and integrate and experience more and more fully for yourself; so that you are not liable to fall in love in a projective way, and to imagine somebody else as possessing what are really qualities of your own being. This is, in some way, the essence of Plato's method. This is made much of in Persian Sufi mystic and poetic tradition: they have recourse to this sort of technique quite a lot, and there are some very famous Persian epic poems about famous pairs of lovers, but you usually find that the lover, that is to say the male lover, goes off into the wilderness immediately after falling in love, and he stays there 30 or 40 years just contemplating the beauty of the lady he has fallen in love with. It becomes a sort of spiritual path. But he certainly doesn't marry and settle down with her and have kids, or anything like that. So, yes, I think in this sort of way one can, if one is very determined, make a positive use of the experience of falling in love, which is rather different from just being very fond of someone or being sexually attracted to them though, if you approach the person with whom you have fallen in love, usually these other factors do enter in and obviously complicate the situation. Anyway, that was your first question; and the second one? Let me just add something: I think one is aware of the dangers of relationships and sexual attachment and projection and all that, but at the same time one must be very careful not to throw away the baby with the bath-water, because the sort of feelings that do come up, so to speak, when one falls in love, in themselves are very valuable. So you don't want to waste them by just allowing them to be projected and following that through in the usual way; on the other hand, you don't want to deny them or try to convince yourself that they are not there, or are not important. You certainly should not crush them or suppress them, but try to do something of a positive nature with them. Because they do reveal to you something about yourself; they do put you in contact with a very important aspect of yourself, which is, of course, your more deeply or more vibrantly emotional self. Anyway?

Lalitaratna: The second one has the implication of you being able to fall in love with something of your choice, which is a bit different. The first is accidental; but now I am wondering: is it possible to choose well, this is still part of the first one can you choose someone to fall in love with, or something

S.: Yes, I think this is what very often people do.

Lalitaratna: Ah!

[164]

S.: I think it is what they do; because they see someone they like the look of, and to begin with it is no more than that. Then they start thinking about them a lot, seeing a lot of them, and then more and more feelings start becoming involved; the projection becomes stronger and stronger, and then the actual process of falling in love starts. So I think usually, to begin

with, you know exactly what is happening, really, at the back of your mind; you know what you are doing, and you want to do it. But I think one could use this capacity in a positive way also, by allowing yourself to fall in love with something of an essentially positive nature.

Lalitaratna: Yes, that is what I am interested in.

S.: I mean perhaps dissociated from any concrete person, even. It may be some character from literature or from mythology that you start off with a very strong feeling for, and allow your emotions and your feelings to gather about that image, that figure. I think you can certainly do this if you really want to. Pygmalion fell in love with a statue, didn't he? (...!)

Lalitaratna: That brings the question neatly on to the second half, which was:

2) Can one fall in love with the Bodhisattva visualized in meditation, and if this is possible is it desirable?

S.: I think it is possible; I think it is very difficult. I would say it was desirable, but very difficult, because there has to be a definite emotional connection established, and that is not easy, because the figure of the Bodhisattva does represent or embody a certain quite high spiritual level; and sometimes we are reliant, at least to begin with, on pictorial representations, on thangkas and so on, and very often they are not especially inspiring or attractive maybe because they are as it were oriental. You can't latch on to them emotionally so easily. I think you very rarely find a thangka that you can latch on to, in fact, in that way, that is really deeply attractive. You can recognize it in theory or in principle, but that emotional response, very often, is not there. Whereas maybe you can see certain figures in Western art and you do respond to them very powerfully, because the art is of such a nature it may be very fine art, and it also may be something with which culturally you are in sympathy, you are in accordance. But I think this is probably the main point that emerges from this discussion your feelings, your emotions, are actually much more under your control than you usually think. Maybe the word 'control' isn't quite the right one. You can guide your feelings, I think. You can mould your feelings, or shape your feelings, to a very much greater extent than you usually do consider. You are not just the victim of your feelings. They are raw material which you can use. So I think one must be very careful to guide and direct one's positive feelings in this way, rather than try to check them or even suppress them, because you are afraid that they may lead you in an unskilful direction. In that way you just impoverish your life emotionally.

Prasannasiddhi: If you did fall in love with, say, the Bodhisattva you visualized, where would that experience fit in with an actual experience of the Bodhisattva?

S.: Well, you would fall in love, let us say, to begin with, with the samayasattva, but the fact that you had fallen in love with the samayasattva would mean that you would be able to concentrate on that particular Bodhisattva in the samayasattva form quite intensely, and have eventually a quite vivid as it were subjective experience; and that would certainly lead later on to the experience of the Bodhisattva in the jnanasattva form. You might have the problem, in a way, on a certain level, of detaching yourself from the samayasattva Bodhisattva form, but that no doubt one would deal with when one came to it this is what one finds happening in the case of certain mystics especially in the [165] Sufi tradition and with some Christian mystics, too that they manage to fall in love, as it were, with whatever happens to be the

object of their devotion: whether a particular saint or spiritual guide on a higher plane, or whatever. In the case of Muhammad, there is some record of a strange spiritual experience that he had in relation to a very beautiful youth. It is as though he, so we are told, fell in love just for a short period with him, and had a quite profound spiritual experience in that connection. A bit like what Plato describes in the Symposium. But it is as though there are two extremes one must avoid. One is letting one's emotions go wherever they want to go, as it were, even in an unskilful direction, and on the other suppressing one's emotions, including one's positive emotions. We usually oscillate between the two: indulging our emotions to such an extent that they become unskilful, or suppressing them. I think you have to be careful that you don't do that, otherwise you are in a situation where normally say, when you are living in London or wherever it happens to be you are just indulging your emotions in a somewhat unskilful way; but when you, say, come away on retreat, say, to a place like Il Convento, well, here you are just sitting on them. Do you see what I mean? What is needed is a Middle Way an actual quite powerful development of your emotions in a positive way; so that you are in a state, as it were, of being in love, though there is no one in particular that you are in love with. You could even say you were in love with everybody, or everything. So that is rather different from a little lukewarm metta, thinly spread over everything, like workhouse jam. Do you see what I mean?

Lalitaratna: Yes. (Pause.) Just a small point. That problem of detachment is that why we dissolve the figures in meditation, to help avoid that, or is there another reason altogether?

S.: Yes, on a certain level, it would be for that reason, though that would be a comparatively high level. But I think usually, when one dissolves at the end of practice, it is more that you are decided about the practice. Well, I have said somewhere that this is the tradition you can do either. You can dissolve the figure back into the blue sky, or you can allow the figure to remain. But if you allow the figure to remain, you have to be a bit careful, because you may be able to sort of carry the figure around with you, but you must consider the effect it may have on other things that you are supposed to be doing. You may experience a certain amount of conflict. So probably, for the beginner and for quite a long time afterwards, it is wiser to end the practice and dissolve the figure. If you are on solitary retreat, of course, you could in a sense experiment with just not dissolving the figure and allowing it as it were to stay with you if you do in fact reach that degree of intensity of concentration, which perhaps not many people would on solitary retreat.

Gerry: Bhante, with regard to falling in love, you said 'if you are that way inclined.'

S.: I did say 'and most people are that way inclined,' didn't I?

Gerry: Yes, nonetheless, you did say that. So are there some people who are not that way inclined? And why do people fall in love?

S.: Why do people fall in love? Well, I think you just have Well, why ask me? (laughter). As I said the other evening, you ought to be able to look into your own mind or your own heart. One might even say some people might even regard you as the expert, as it were! (Laughter.) It certainly ... with me. So why ask me? I can offer a few modest observations, on the fringes, as it were. Why does one fall in love? Well, why does one do anything? One presumably falls in love because one needs to. But, again, what happens when you fall in love? I think the main characteristic of the experience is that you are put in touch with a [166] degree of

emotional intensity that you don't usually experience; or even a certain quality, as well as intensity, of feeling or emotion that you don't usually experience. And that is usually associated with some other person - usually with another person. There is something in the other person that sparks off a certain feeling in you, and that is so as it were pleasurable that you dwell on it and allow it to grow, which usually means that you allow yourself to become preoccupied with the person that sparks off the feeling. And in the end you find yourself, very often, in the state where you can't think about anything else except that person. In other words, you are concentrating, perhaps, on that person in a way, or to a degree, that you have never concentrated on anything else in your life. This is one of the reasons why it is so valuable.

So perhaps, in a way, you experience a need to be in contact with what, after all, is a level of your own being, or a deeper aspect of your own being. In the form of that capacity for intense feeling. Perhaps we have lost that kind of experience to such an extent that we no longer regard it as a sort of normal part of living; we regard it as something exceptional, which perhaps it isn't really, or shouldn't be. And you value the experience, very often, even if it has certain painful aspects after a while, because it has an intensity which you don't normally experience, and therefore you feel much more alive than you usually do feel. Also, it can be very pleasurable, at least up to a point, to experience a state of such concentration, because a state of concentration is a state of integration. You are integrated, at least for the time being.

But I think the whole trouble starts when you project, and projection - sometimes massive projection - seems to be an integral part, usually, of the whole process. You attribute the experience that you are having to the fact that the other person possesses those qualities; they have the qualities and you are having that experience because through that person you are in contact with those qualities. So the falling in love, though in a way you are experiencing yourself very intensely, at the same time in a way it is also an experience of intense alienation because you are attributing what you are experiencing to another person, instead of recognizing it as part of yourself.

So really you need to do two things; keep in contact with the experience, but detach it from the person to whom you attribute it, or whom you hold responsible for it. You think: "That person gives me the experience; they are so wonderful, they are this, that and the other." Well, perhaps they have got very good qualities, but nonetheless you are projecting. And very often other people can't see what it is that you see in that person. They don't see what you see, which is not surprising; and you think 'they don't understand, they don't appreciate that person, they don't know how wonderful that person is', etc. etc. So you have on the one hand to retain the experience itself, but then detach it from the person that sparked it off, so that you are not projecting it on to that person, or so that you are not projecting on to that person something that belongs to you. It is quite a difficult thing to do.

: ... the second part is very important - to detach yourself. How do you do it? How do you actually detach [yourself]?

S: One way is, of course, just keeping away from the person, physically away from them; and recognizing, at least in theory, at least in principle, what the actual situation is. Say: 'What I am experiencing actually hasn't anything to do with her,' or him as the case may be, or it. You can, of course, develop something of this sort of feeling just through contact with nature, the beauties of nature: trees and flowers and clouds and the sky. It doesn't have to be human

beings, though very often, if not usually, we have our most intense experiences of this sort in connection with human beings.

[167]

Tape 155 Side 2

And this is also, maybe, where fidelity comes in: that, if you happen to be separated from someone physically, someone that you have very strong feelings for, you just take that as an opportunity of developing the more emotional side of your relationship and gently disengaging the projection from the other person, while retaining, perhaps, your objective good will and metta towards them.

Sometimes I regard it as a little odd when, as occasionally has happened in connection with Tuscany's, there have been one or two people in the past who are coming on Tuscany's straight from the arms of their girl friend, and they go back from Tuscany straight into the arms of their girl friend. I think they should allow a little interval to elapse in both cases, so that they are able, perhaps, to disengage whatever projections they have and dwell more on the emotional side of the relationship - if, in fact, of course, there is an emotional side to it. Usually there is, perhaps. But you see what I mean?

It is quite a crucial issue for most people, because most people do find other people very important, and very important emotionally. So, yes, they fall in love and they project, and sometimes they go through the same series of painful experiences or painful-and-pleasurable experiences again and again. but never learn anything from it all, which is rather a pity.

Some people perhaps never experience any strong emotions at all. They experience just a strong sexual feeling, which they satisfy, and perhaps emotion just never comes into it at all.

Prasannasiddhi: So would an individual's natural state, in a sense, be one of being in love but without any particular object?

S: I think one could say that, in the case of a reasonably highly developed person, who was not just content and happy and cheerful but who did experience a very high degree of emotional positivity all the time. Not just that - it's more than just emotional positivity, I don't know that we have really any word for it. One might, perhaps, possibly, use in this connection the word (if one dares) 'passion'. But it is usually so much misunderstood, isn't it? But there is intensity of feeling and, in a sense, purity of feeling. (I am using the word 'purity' in a non-moral sense. Integrity of feeling, perhaps one might say.) And it is a sort of wholeheartedness of feeling. So perhaps this should be part of the ordinary experience of the reasonably well-developed person.

Mike: Do you think it's fair to say that the Spiral Path is a process of falling in love with life in an ever deeper and deeper way?

S: Yes; because, after all, in the Spiral Path, states of positive emotion occupy a very important place. You've got all sorts of - joy, delight, rapture, ecstasy - so, yes, one could look at it in that way; broadly speaking. Clearly, the element of Insight enters later on. So there is also clarity. Perhaps people should read their Symposium again.

In a way, the Buddhist parallel is the story of Nanda, isn't it? - Sundarananda. Though it is not put in that sort of way; maybe the way that it comes across in the sutta is a bit, as it were, passionless. Maybe someone should redo it.

I think also something which does help to put one in touch with this sort of feeling is the reading of some kinds of poetry. Do you know what I mean? - not the sort of works I was mentioning earlier on, because they are too big; what you want is the longest lyric that you can get: a lyric being a poem of great emotional intensity. It has been a subject of discussion among the critics how long a lyric can be, because it is very difficult to sustain, very difficult for the poet to sustain a very high degree of emotional intensity for very long. Shelley [168] is rather good at it: that is one reason he is such a great poet and so well appreciated. There is *The Skylark* for instance, which sustains a great pitch of emotional intensity for a number of stanzas. I did read somewhere that it was generally considered that the longest lyric in the English language was - can anyone guess? *The longest lyric. A sustained flight, as it were.* (Pause.) It's not a very well-known poem, though you get extracts from it in anthologies, I think it should be much, much better known than it is. It is, the *Song to David*; Smart's *Song to David*. It is a quite ecstatic poem. It deals with the theme of David, King David, but don't let that put you off; after all, you are not put off by Michelangelo's David; why be put off by Christopher Smart's David? It has actually got very little to do with David. But the imagery is biblical. yes. it is a song to David, a song in praise of the young David. It is a quite ecstatic work and very lengthy for a lyric. I don't know how you will get on with it, but read it.

What you can do is to make one's personal selection of these very high-powered lyrics, these lyrics of a great pitch of intensity, and maybe learn them by heart. Because I think, to experience them in their full intensity, you have to read them again and again and again. Once or twice is not enough. And I think, reading these sort of poems, reading, say *The Skylark*, reading the *Song to David*, and whatever else you find in the way of a lyric has this sort of effect on you, anything to which you respond very strongly. I think some of the choruses in *Prometheus Unbound* have this effect, or a lot of *Epipsychidion* has this effect. Just read it over and over again, and try, in a sense, to work yourself up into a feeling of emotional intensity. I think you can actually do this. But I think you have to select these works; Just select works - whether lyric or not - which do actually move you very strongly.

One that I found quite moving, though it is in a way a quite sober sort of poem, was Johnson's *Lines on the Death of Dr Levett*. They are deeply moving, though not in a very obvious way. So you might get yourself started reading something like that. But I think probably poems like Shelley's *Skylark* often are the best means. When I was in my teens, I used to find Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* had this effect. Maybe some of you could try that. Another, quite lengthy work, a composite work which I read only recently - it is a translation from the Persian was Attar's *Conference of Birds*. There is a new translation in the Penguin Classics series. That reaches a quite extraordinary pitch of emotional intensity, again and again, and it really does come across even though it is a translation. It is very well translated into English poetry of the more traditional type; traditional in the sense of rhyme and metre and all that. It is a very intense poem indeed. Also very amusing; full of very amusing little stories, episodes, incidents. But a profound spiritual teaching at the same time. It is, very witty.

: Do you think you could do this with music?

S: I think you can. But I think the effect of music, though powerful, seems to be more

transitory: it does not seem to last. But, yes, you could certainly do it with music, Well, again, the Sufis use music in this way, quite deliberately, a certain kind of music; not just any old music, as it were. So, yes, again, this illustrates the point I made earlier, you can actually do much more with your feelings than you usually think, just as you can do much more with yourself, or with your mind, than you usually think. You don't just have to be the victim of your emotions; you don't have to [just let them] drag you along in whichever direction they want to drag you. You can really do exactly what you please with them; not by an effort of will - no, not that - but by gently and wisely leading them in a certain direction, a skilful direction.

I think - just thinking aloud a little bit; I might be wrong here, but I suspect that, at least in the affairs of ordinary life, the English are a bit lacking in emotional intensity. There is quite a bit of it in English poetry, but it is rather [169] lacking from English life. So I think perhaps this is something that people of English origin, and perhaps even of Western origin, have to be careful of. The Indians seem to be more easily capable of emotional intensity. The Persians, judging by their poetry - but I don't know, perhaps they are a bit like the English really - but certainly in literature they are capable of a tremendous emotional intensity, they really do let themselves go, in a way that no English poet does; not even Shelley, though I think Shelley has longer and more frequent flights of this sort, probably, than any other English poet, and I think this is, as I say, one of the features of his greatness and why he appeals to people so strongly. Though it is quite a long poem, and not exactly a lyric, I think Adonais can have this effect, especially the last 12 or 14 stanzas. Or even - on a slightly lower level, because it is a very beautiful poem or series of poems - Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam; very strong emotional content there.

Anyway, we could go on all night in that sort of way; perhaps we had better stop, if there are no more questions.

There are a couple of points.

S: All right, a couple of quick points.

: Bearing in mind what you said about music and poetry, do you think this would help the situation of people being, as you were saying, quite unskilful, living in a place like London and their coming to a place like this and having to sit on one's emotions? Do you think there is a lot more people can do?

S: I think probably there is. Maybe we have to look into this more, experiment; maybe the team members could think about this, especially, say, for next year - whether it might not be a good idea to have, say, carefully selected poetry readings or something like that. It is just a possibility; I am not actually making the suggestion, I am just mentioning it as an example of possibilities. A lot of the material we read - good, solid Buddhistic stuff - is not always immediately emotionally appealing, very often because it is a translation. So we have to be careful that we are getting emotional nourishment as well.

I was also going to say: when you are in a place like (London), be very careful what sort films and concerts you go to, because they all have a very powerful emotional effect. I know sometimes people going and seeing a certain film dream about it, not to say have nightmares about it for days and days or nights and nights afterwards. These things have a very strong

effect, so you must be very choosy, very selective; otherwise you are just trying to pull in two different directions at the same time. If you go and hear Bach's B minor Mass, that's one thing; but be very careful about, say, going to a pop concert or going to see a very ordinary film, where quite unskilful emotions are very vividly portrayed - portrayed in a way that leaves a very strong impression on your mind, affecting it for weeks and weeks afterwards. Again, one can control one's own emotional life, but you must not just go along with the flow or the current, as it were. You know, someone says, let's go and see a film,' and you say, 'Right, what shall we see?' and they say'. 'Oh, it doesn't really matter, just let's go and see,' and off you go. This does happen, among your own friends, sometimes; it is not very good.

Chairman: The last point: ...

: I'm afraid it's rather a subjective question ...

S: Well, we have become rather subjective, haven't we?

: Going back to the lyrics mentioned. Would you think of Matthew Arnold's Scholar Gypsy as a ... lyric?

[170]

S: I wouldn't think of it as a lyric. It hasn't great intensity, but it has a certain amount of feeling, quite a lot of feeling, in fact. I remember years ago in Brighton we had a poetry reading, and I was asked - I think I was asked - to read part of The Scholar Gypsy, and Devamitra coached me a bit. I must say reading aloud in that way I was quite surprised - yes, a little bit surprised - how much there was in it. It did seem a much more moving poem than one might have thought at first sight. One just has to make one's own discoveries. Some things will move one person deeply, and not another, so you just have to make your own discoveries and your own choice, your own selection, and work with those poems that you personally find moving. Some people don't find The Skylark at all moving! I find that rather strange, but some people, I believe, don't! It's just a poem about a bird, so what?!

I think also - last point - it is not a bad thing, in fact I think it is a good thing - to learn poems by heart. I think when you are young you can do this easily. When I was quite young I learned a lot of poems by heart, and I remember them even now. And you can repeat them to yourself, you know, at odd moments; when you are travelling in the tube, or you are lying awake at night unable to sleep. Just repeat these poems over and over again: 'Hail to thee, blithe spirit', or whatever it happens to be.

Oh well, perhaps we had better leave It there.

Voices: Thank you. Bhante.

[171]

Tape 16, Side 1

Chairman: Tonight we are on the second session of studying the chapter 'The Instruction in the Transitoriness of the Composite', Ch.IV, ..., and we have eight questions tonight. The first is Prasannasiddhi's question.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, could you comment on the relative merits of scientific cosmology as opposed to Buddhist symbolic cosmology?

S.: I once asked a question rather like this of a rather bright young Tibetan lama. I think it actually was the young Pabungkapa(?) Rimpoche, that I was talking to somebody about just a little while ago. As I said, he was a very bright young incarnate lama, and he thought for just a little while and then he said: 'They are both useful for certain purposes'! So I think that about sums it up: they are both useful for certain purposes each is useful for a certain purpose, but the purposes for which scientific cosmology is useful are not quite the same, one might say, as the purposes for which the Buddhist traditional so to speak symbolic cosmology is useful. Perhaps we had better leave it at that.

Prasannasiddhi: I suppose the discussion arose because well, we felt that scientific cosmology was quite useful because it gave you a sense of the infinity of universes and the scale of processes and evolution of universes.

S.: Well, scientific cosmology is just part of a much wider body of knowledge which has all sorts of applications in the field of modern technology and so on. Just as traditional Buddhist cosmology has all sorts of practical applications in the field of art and meditation, and so on. To what extent they overlap, if they do overlap at all, is quite a big question.

Chairman: The next question comes from Mark.

Mark: Bhante, this question refers to the passage at the top of p.43 beginning 'From the lower cosmic circle of Wind...' [172] Would you explain what this passage means?

S.: I rather thought I would get a question about this. I think the meaning is quite clear and quite obvious, so long as one considers this as it were symbolic cosmology on its own terms. The general idea that is being dealt with is 'the transitoriness of the composite', so these higher realms are also included in the composite; they are transitory; they all disintegrate. But they disintegrate, so to speak, at different rates, and this passage simply gives the rates in terms of the destruction by wind, destruction by water, destruction by fire. Do you see what I mean?

Mark: It's almost as if, if it's destroyed by fire, it happens quicker than if it's destroyed by

S.: Yes, one could put it in that way. For instance: quote from the lower cosmic circle of Wind up to but excluding the fourth stage of meditative concentration, there exists nothing of a permanent nature nor anything solid or unchanging. Sometimes what is below the first stage of meditative concentration is destroyed by cosmic Fire, what is below the second stage by cosmic Water and what is below the third stage by cosmic Wind.' Then there is a summary from the Abhidharmakosa: Destruction by Fire takes place seven times, by Water once. When the latter has occurred seven times, The rest is destroyed by Wind. That is to say, when destruction by fire has taken place altogether 49 times, and destruction by water altogether seven times, what is left the subtlest and most long-lasting, as it were, level of mundane existence is destroyed by Wind. So it is as though fire destroys the grossest levels of the composite, water the levels of medium grossness, and wind the most subtle levels of all. This is roughly speaking; it is just an illustration in terms of traditional cosmology not so much the relative degrees of transitoriness, but the length of time, so to speak, that these different levels

last and the different ways in which or means by which they are destroyed.

Dhammarati: I was surprised that fire came at the gross level and water at a more subtle level. I half expected fire to be split up...

S.: One has to remember, perhaps, that the elements spoken of here by those names, the forces spoken of by those names, are probably not to be identified with the material elements of those names.

Chairman: The next question comes from Dhammarati.

Dhammarati: It's a type of ... cosmology, and it came up ... discussion. Is the bardo as a realm accounted for in terms of the three lokas? If you look at the kamaloka, rupaloka, arupaloka, is the bardo accounted for somewhere within there, or is that a kind of mode?

S.: I don't remember any actual correlation, but I would say, at a guess as it were, that if one was to try to correlate, the bardo state would probably be somewhere in the region of neighbourhood concentration; though, again, within that state, as within the ordinary human state, the conscious waking state, one would have various experiences of a higher nature. One has even a very momentary glimpse of the Transcendental.

Dhammarati: So that would place it somewhere below the first dhyana?

S.: Yes. But, as I said, this is, so to speak, a guess, because I haven't anything in the tradition, in the text, to go by; I don't recollect any actual correlation in that way.

Dhammarati: But would the same sort of ... would hold the subjective state would have some kind of objective name corresponding to it? (?)

S.: Yes, in the case of the experience of the subtle body, let us say, in the bardo, the world that is experienced as a subtle world. But apparently a world not of the same level as the world corresponding to even the first dhyana. Because if one considers one is detached from one's gross physical body, so one is not in the gross physical world, so to speak. One exists in one's subtle body, and corresponding to that, no doubt, there is a subtle world, which you experience through that subtle body; but in that subtle body, of course, you have various experiences which, in a manner of speaking, pertain to all sorts of levels, not excluding even the Transcendental itself.

Chairman: The next question comes from Pavel.

[173]

Pavel: For a long time I have been puzzled by consciousness, by cosmic consciousness. It seems that the cosmic consciousness is even more objective than rupa. It survives not only individual experience or individual life, but it also survives from universe to universe. Can you say something about these relations between consciousness and rupa, and subtle worlds, in terms of Buddhist cosmology?

S.: I am not quite sure what the question is, but let me deal with it in my own way. When one speaks about consciousness, what does one speak of? Consciousness, one might say, is

indefinable, but we all know what consciousness is; we all know what the term refers to, because we experience it, it is a quality of our own being, by virtue of the fact that we exist at all as self-conscious beings, we know what consciousness is. But it is very difficult to speak about consciousness, because in order to speak about consciousness you objectify it; you have to objectify it. But something objective is just what it is not, because it is per se, by definition, almost, that which is subjective. So the moment you begin to talk about it, the moment you objectify it, you falsify it; you speak of something which is, in a manner of speaking, at least, essentially subjective as though it was objective, and I think that the difficulties represented by the questions that you have raised come about when we start thinking because we cannot but think of something which is essentially subjective as being in fact objective.

Pavel: But how can we then say that after our death our subtle body joins the universal consciousness, and in

S.: Well, that is just a part of the wider question of how we can speak about our consciousness at all. We do speak about it, but to the extent that we speak about it we falsify it. It is as though we have to try to experience our consciousness without that sort of movement towards objectification, and therefore without falsification. It is a quite strange situation; it is in a way a paradoxical situation. We involve ourselves in a contradiction whenever we start talking about our consciousness. We certainly don't perceive anybody else's consciousness, do we? I don't; is there anybody who does? I mean what do we perceive? We perceive people's bodies; we don't perceive their minds. We infer the existence of their minds. We perceive our own bodies, and that is a quite extraordinary experience, because we experience the body as it were from the outside and also from the inside; and that experience from the inside is connected with what we call consciousness. Well, in a way, the experience of our own bodies from the outside is also connected with consciousness, because it is as though our experience of our own bodies takes place within our own consciousness; in fact, it is difficult to say either that our consciousness is within the body or that the body is within the consciousness. It is probably more correct, or less misleading, to say that the body is in consciousness rather than consciousness in body. So, that being the situation, when you start almost reifying consciousness and thinking of it as an objective thing that exists as a thing in an objective universe, and then asking questions on that basis, one cannot but get involved in difficulties. Nonetheless, the structure of the mind is such that it seems we cannot help thinking in that way and therefore raising those sort of questions. That probably leaves people more confused than they were before! In some ways, that is a good thing, because it means you are not taking for granted things which before you took for granted. The Chinese Surangama Sutra goes into this in a quite interesting way the one that isn't a translation of a Sanskrit text, the one that is included in The Buddhist Bible, where the Buddha asks Ananda where his mind is; and Ananda says, to begin with, that it is in his body and then the Buddha shows it can't be within his body, so he says it is outside and the Buddha shows him that it can't be outside; so he thinks it must be just in between and the Buddha shows him it can't be in between either; so it ends up being a sort of [174] mystery. And when Ananda experiences this mystery he has a sort of spiritual experience. But what is mind? What is consciousness? It is a very strange thing, isn't it? But I think if we think of consciousness as a thing that can be enumerated, along with other things, material things, we falsify the situation from the very start. But, on the other hand, we can't help doing this. But there does nonetheless remain something within our experience, something within us, which is unobjectifiable and therefore unfalsifiable.

Pavel: This question arose [in discussion about] when this universe, at the end of the aeon, collapses; so what happens to consciousness?

S.: But then that question arises when you think of consciousness as a thing, analogous to the objective universe itself. You can ask what happens to a thing, but can you ask what happens to something which is not a thing? You might say what is it if it isn't a thing? But you can't say anything about it; you can't even say what it is, not being a thing, without making it into a sort of thing of some kind or other. A subtle thing is still a thing. It is a quite strange thing, this whole relationship of consciousness to its object, the self to the world. I think we take it for granted that the self here, the perceiving consciousness, is a thing out there, and then we stand aside from the whole situation and see the object of perception as a thing, and the perceiving subject, the perceiving consciousness, also as a thing; which, as I said, falsifies the whole situation. We can have an infinite regression here, because we can then stand aside from ourselves, seeing ourselves perceiving a thing. Perhaps we need to ponder on the nature of consciousness. We certainly become very aware of these sort of questions reading works like the Surangama Sutra which I mentioned, and also the Lankavatara Sutra, and perhaps vijñānavāda(?) literature. It gives us a quite different perspective on things. According to the Lankavatara Sutra, you end up realizing that everything is the One Mind; but, of course, it is easy to say that, but then that One Mind which you realize is not as it were a thing, not even a mental thing, which becomes the object of your consciousness. I think it is probably important to get to a point where you actually realize, you actually see, that you don't know what consciousness is; you can't know what consciousness is. Because if you as it were know what it is, you make it an object which is exactly what it isn't; so what you know may be something may be knowable but it can't, by very definition, be consciousness that you know. Perhaps we had better leave it at that; perhaps people will ponder on it.

Dhammarati: I have a couple of questions... the whole picture the way the universe is, every mental state has an objective we talk about [whether there is] an objective thing corresponding to it, so that ... realm psychologically there is an(?) objective thing corresponding to that, there are the dhyanas and there are objective things corresponding to those. So coming back to this picture in Gampopa, each of these objective planes is being destroyed by the cosmic wind, the cosmic fire, the cosmic water, and we are left with consciousness without any kind of apparently objective correlate, there is no plane at the end of the ... that has any correspondence with the consciousness.

S.: No, this isn't quite true; Gampopa doesn't go it fully, but the general Buddhist tradition is that the subtlest plane of all survives, so to speak, the interval between the destruction of one universe and the creation of another; and the beings that have not gained emancipation during the previous world cycle exist [175] in their subtlest form, still, in or on that particular level. And then, when a new world, a new universe is produced, they gradually are reborn at lower and lower levels until they find, so to speak, their natural level and the whole process, including the possibility of liberation, is repeated all over again. That is the general Buddhist pattern. It is formulated in an as it were unphilosophical manner, in a sense, in what one might describe as not exactly pseudo-scientific but symbolically scientific terms. It is formulated in terms of something of an objective nature happening 'out there', with consciousness also, in a sense, as a thing, entering into the picture.

Dhammarati: The second thing that came to mind was when you do the Six Element Practice, and you come to the end of consciousness, we talk about our individual consciousness

merging with the universal element of consciousness. We use the very same language as we use in this ... rupa merging with the universal element of mind; so ... consciousness ... ?

S.: Yes, clearly the language can't be understood literally. But, anyway, in what other terms can you express yourself? Because, supposing the boundaries of your individual consciousness dissolve, what happens? It is as though the more limited consciousness has, in a manner of speaking, become absorbed in the less limited, even the universal, consciousness; but then, of course, you are thinking of that universal consciousness as an object, so to speak, so one cannot take that sort of phraseology literally. One may have to look in one's own experience and see what happens, and see how closely it does correspond to that sort of language or whether it corresponds at all, or whether some other mode of expression is not more appropriate, more suitable.

Dhammarati: Off the top of your head, could you think of an expression that would be more suitable, that would more closely describe things?

S.: There is another traditional way of putting it not in terms of merging, not in terms of 'the dewdrop slipping into the shining sea', which isn't really very traditional, Buddhistically speaking. The comparison is [with] when you smash a pot. If you have a pot, within that pot there is a certain limited amount of space; the pot encloses a space. And the space demarcated by the pot is marked off from all the space outside. But when you have smashed the pot, what happens? There is no distinction, no line of distinction as it were between the space within the pot and the space outside the pot. You can speak of the one merging with the other, but it is really not like that; it is not like the dewdrop slipping into the shining sea, it is just that a barrier is removed. So if you no longer draw a line around yourself and say that inside this is me, inside this is my consciousness; outside is not-me, is the other; and then if you just un-draw that line, well, it corresponds to the smashing of that pot. So the language of merging is not appropriate, but you can see, perhaps, the sort of thing that, in a way, happens.

Mike: I was just thinking that, to the extent that everything around us is a manifestation of someone's consciousness, to what extent can you objectify, say, your consciousness through the objective things you create around you? To what extent can you perceive other people's consciousness through their external manifestations?

S.: But that is our experience, isn't it? Perhaps we need to look at our actual experience more and analyse it. I was in fact going to say something along these lines in connection with something Dhammarati said earlier. There is, so to speak, say, a mind, and there is, say, corresponding to that mind or that kind of mind, a world. But it is not that you have got two different things in correspondence, two different things fitting together, as when you do a bit of dovetailing in woodwork. It is not quite like that. It is as though, when the one is given, the other is [176] automatically given; they sort of hang together. Where there is a subject there is an object; where there is an object there is a subject. In other words, the kind of experience with which we are familiar is a kind of experience in which this kind of polarization as it were into subject and object the perceived and that which is perceived exists as it were naturally. In a sense, it isn't that we perceive something; it is as though there is, let's say, consciousness, and that consciousness has a subjective pole, as I have sometimes called it, and an objective pole. Perhaps that is the best way that we can put it. But it is a quite mysterious thing, quite a strange thing; because, as you said, you look at other people well, they exist in your consciousness; you perceive them; but you know, or at least you infer, that

they don't exist only in your consciousness. Though there is a presentation of them within your consciousness, there seems to be something else involved in the situation not just your subjectivity expressing itself through, say, your objective bodily presence, but something in a manner of speaking, behind what you perceive of them, which seems analogous to the experience, to the subjectivity, that you experience as behind you; behind what you infer, or you assume, presents to them. But you don't directly perceive them perceiving you. Well, yes, maybe there is an exception to that; maybe if you look at someone, especially if there is an intensive communication, sometimes you can have an odd sort of experience of almost seeing yourself through their eyes; and it is in connection with that, perhaps, that I speak sometimes of this experience of mutual self-transcendence. The eye is a quite strange thing in that sense. The eyes, really, are the windows of the soul. But supposing the eyes are the windows of the soul; so looking out through someone's eyes, what is there? Their soul; the soul is essentially subjective; so can you see something that is subjective? No, you can't, because it becomes an object. It is essentially subjective. So you can only perceive it if you don't perceive it. You can only perceive somebody else's soul if, so to speak, their soul passes out, in a manner of speaking, from them through their eyes into your eyes (because you see their eyes or, in a way, their soul), and starts looking out through your eyes, so that the eyes with which you see them are the eyes at the same time with which they see you. Hence the mutual self-transcendence that I mentioned. Do you see what I mean? Sometimes you do get a sort of glimpse or hint of this in the course of communication. So, so long as you see somebody else's soul as it were out there and looking at you from there, you don't see the soul, you see something else; you may just see the eyeball. But it is possible to have that experience whereby someone's seeing of you becomes almost your seeing of them. But if you haven't had some actual, even very slight, experience of this, you probably won't understand what I am talking about. But again, it underlines this very mysterious, very strange nature of consciousness. And even if we speak of consciousness as having a sort of objective pole and a subjective pole, that really falsifies it, because it makes that subjective pole as it were objective. So you've got, as it were, a consciousness out there if it is an object with two poles, both of which actually, since you are observing them, are objective! The subjective pole is, as it were, within you and imperceptible, just because it is subjective.

Pavel: This objective pole, our consciousness, we actually tend to believe exists even outside of our consciousness, even if we sleep or if we die, that it still exists independently of our consciousness. So

S.: Well, yes, it comes back to the same dilemma that I mentioned before: because one is thinking of that consciousness, which is essentially subjective, as something existing 'out there'. So, even when you are perceiving consciousness as it were, consciousness doesn't exist out there. Or does that make it less clear than ever? [177] Perhaps it is something that does need to be pondered on. In other words, what you really have to do is to try to think of something without thinking of it; which is not an easy thing to do! It is like chasing your own tail if you have a tail, that is.

Tejamitra: In defining consciousness, can it be of any help to see it as a process rather than seeing it as an act(?)?

S.: Yes, it can be a help in a way; but even if you see something as a process you are still seeing it as something objective, something 'out there' which is, by definition, what it is not. Do you ever see consciousness, even as a process? Here you are, say, looking at someone; all

right, you are looking at someone, so there is awareness, there is consciousness, but can you really make that consciousness an object? What is it that exists when consciousness exists, one might say?

Tejamitra: What I was thinking was just the perceiving: it is a perceiving process going on.

S.: It is as though there was a sort of illuminated area, one might say, just as this room is illuminated. There is an illuminated area within which things appear, within which things are perceived. But you can't really turn round and perceive the perceiver; the perceiver never enters into that illuminated area. It's as though the torch doesn't illuminate the torch.

Hugh: I was just wondering if it might help to bring in a Rembrandt self-portrait it occurred to me, thinking of the phenomenon of the self-portrait, where the man has experienced himself and managed to get something of that experience on to a canvas; and then 200 years later we can share that experience, somehow, or something of it.

S.: Rembrandt, I believe, painted his self-portraits by looking in a mirror. I think that is what artists usually do. So what happens? By looking at themselves in a mirror, they come to know what they actually look like, and they can depict on canvas what they actually look like, just as though they were depicting some other person. But at the same time they have got their own inner experience, so in a way they know why they look like that. So they can depict not only their external appearance but make it the medium of some expression, of the way they are, the way that they feel. But a great portrait painter can do that, apparently, with a sitter who is not himself; can see, as it were, the soul revealing itself or expressing itself in the face. But, of course, in the case of a self-portrait, you have got an extra source of knowledge, which is your own direct experience of yourself. This is why, perhaps, self-portraits by great artists are of very special interest: because they have got not only indirect knowledge of the sitter via his external appearance but direct knowledge via their personal experience in this case. So I think Rembrandt's self-portraits are very interesting: he did more than 30 of them. And Drer's are very interesting; he did quite a few. I forget who else did self-portraits; who did?

: Van Gogh.

S.: Van Gogh, hm.

: Raphael?

S.: I think several artists and I think Raphael was among them included self-portraits in larger compositions. Botticelli did the same.

[178]

Prasannasiddhi: But even with a painter, it would depend on how well they knew themselves, how well they could depict themselves.

S.: It's as though some of the great artists who are also great portrait painters did have a capacity of seeing very deeply into the character of the sitter. So the assumption is that if they had that kind of insight into the characters of other people, they would have at least some insight into their own character; and Rembrandt seems to have had that. In some of his

self-portraits, especially the later ones, he looks a very battered old man. One can't quite say that he was feeling sorry for himself, but he knows that he has had quite a tough time. You can see that kind of self-knowledge. But he isn't beaten, as it were. In the case of Drer, in the case of his early self-portrait where he represents himself, according to some authorities, as Christ or in a Christ-like way, he apparently seems to think quite a lot of himself. One can see that, and it is as though he knows that, too; he knows that he thinks quite a lot of himself. But there doesn't seem to be quite the depth of self-knowledge that there is in Rembrandt's case in the case of Rembrandt's later self-portraits. Sometimes, I think, in the case of some of Rembrandt's early portraits, portraits of himself as a young man, he too does think quite a lot of himself. Perhaps it is natural in a young man! As one gets older, one realizes one's limitations, perhaps.

Tape 16, Side 2

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, referring back to this business of seeing someone else's consciousness, how would it actually work in the case of someone who had developed supernormal faculties, whereby they could apparently read the thoughts of any person?

S.: Well, what happens when you read the thoughts of other people? I don't suppose anyone's got an experience of this but do you actually sort of see their thoughts? What actually happens? Do you see their mind? In a manner of speaking, you do, but of course, literally, you don't. When you see or you read somebody else's thoughts, their thoughts as it were appear in your mind. When you are thinking, your own thoughts appear in your mind; so, in exactly the same way, when you read somebody else's mind, his thoughts or her thoughts appear in your mind; but you know that they are not your thoughts, you know that they are their thoughts. But the process is just the same. It is as though you think their thoughts, but you know that they are their thoughts and not your thoughts, in the sense that they originate from them and not from you. It is not that you look outside yourself and see a thing called a thought like seeing some writing on the wall. It isn't like that. Sometimes you do know what other people are thinking, even in a quite ordinary sort of way. So next time you have that experience, just look and try to see what is actually happening. I think you will realize that you just become aware of certain thoughts arising in your mind; that is the first instant, as it were. The next instant, you realize that they are not your thoughts but somebody else's thoughts; in other words, you realize that this is what somebody else is thinking.

Chairman: ..., did you have a point?

: Bhante, how does what you said about consciousness relate to the concept of what is known as collective consciousness?

S.: Well, again, it causes one to have serious thoughts as to how literally one can take that concept of the universal or collective consciousness. Clearly, it is not to be taken at its face value. It is what Guenther would call an operational concept; not that there is a thing out there called the collective unconscious. Even if there was, by very definition, you wouldn't be conscious of it. So what [179] does one mean by speaking of the collective unconscious? It is an operational concept in the sense that it is a concept which is invoked, as it were, to explain certain things, certain phenomena; it is a principle of explanation. One must not think of it as a thing, objectively existing like a chair or a table. It is like the law of gravitation; is there such a 'thing' as the law of gravitation? The law of gravitation is a formulation to explain the

way in which natural bodies behave. There is not a 'thing' called gravitation standing behind them and making them work in the way that they do work, function in the way that they do function. I think what we have to realize is the extent to which our thinking is dominated by terms derived from our concrete sense experience, and the very limited degree to which those terms are really applicable to anything of the nature, so to speak, of consciousness. But, even in saying that, I make consciousness into a thing as though it was a material object; so you can see how great the limitation is, to begin with. But we can't do anything else, apparently.

Chairman: The next question comes from Vessantara, on the fourth stage of meditation and solipsism.

Vessantara: It wasn't my question.

Chairman: Does anyone want it? Oh, Steve. Sorry about that.

Steve: On the same page 43, about half way down, after the first paragraph we have gone through, there is a passage: The fourth stage of meditative concentration is destroyed neither by Fire, Water nor Wind, but by death and by the transmigration of beings therein. This sounds a bit solipsistic. Could you explain what constitutes death in this particular state which, as I see, corresponds to the Brahmhaloka?

S.: Gampopa would seem to be saying that, on this particular level the fourth stage of meditative concentration, the fourth dhyana it is something that does not come to an end by reason of as it were collective causes, as it were cosmic causes, but by reason of the death or the termination of the span of existence of the being in that particular state. But it is not altogether clear what exactly he means by that. here is a further quotation: Therefore it is said: The palaces of impermanence rise and disappear together with the beings therein. It is almost as though the beings at this level are equated with the worlds. But, on the other hand, the general Buddhist teaching is definitely of a correlation of beings and worlds within the mundane, not of a reduction of worlds to beings. But one can, in a manner of speaking, reduce worlds to beings, but it is as though one is just switching over to a completely different language in that case, midway; which would seem to lead to confusion. It is said elsewhere in Buddhist sutras that worlds do consist of beings, but that is in the sense that there are no worlds, one might say, without beings to perceive worlds; no objects without subjects. But not that you can reduce worlds to beings in the sense that there can be only perceiving consciousnesses without anything that is perceived. So it doesn't seem to be altogether clear and straightforward here. There seems to be an alternation between two different languages, two different ways of putting things.

Steve: Could you put this in another way which makes it more easily graspable, more readily intelligible?

[180]

S.: Well, I think I have said before that it is as though you can't really separate mind and body; where there is mind there is body, where there is body there is mind. But, of course, the more refined the mind the more refined the consciousness the more refined the body, too; but the general Buddhist teaching is, cosmologically speaking, that worlds evolve the universe, let us say, the cosmos, evolves over an immense period of time, millions and billions of years; so it evolves, and then it involves, it goes through a period of evolution and then a

period of involution, and then a period of quiescence. I have gone into this in the early sections of the Survey. But the period of involution involves the resolution of the whole cosmos into a more and more and more subtle state; so then the question arises say, putting it in a very popular way, popular phraseology 'What happens to all those beings who haven't gained liberation?' So the traditional answer to that is that they assume subtler and subtler bodies; they can't do anything else, because there is no gross matter left in the universe. They assume subtler and subtler bodies, and they are, so to speak, reborn in the highest, subtlest sphere of all, and they remain there, so to speak, until that universe, after a period of quiescence, a period during which they are quiescent, so to speak, starts re-evolving; and then those beings assume more and more gross bodily forms until they come, again, down to their natural level and carry on, karmically speaking, from where they left off. This is the general Buddhist teaching. But Gampopa's statement here or the quotation would not seem to be quite in agreement with that. So there apparently is some inconsistency. Unless there is a wider context which reconciles the inconsistency that Gampopa has not made us aware of. In the case of the beings who are as it were reborn in that highest Brahmaloaka, at the end of the cosmic period, it is not exactly that they are reborn there; it is as though they are reduced to a sort of potential, a seed form as it were. They are almost in a state of hibernation, you might say. They are not actually functioning, but the seed is there. And when the universe starts re-evolving, that seed gradually fructifies, and as a result of that a being is born on a level corresponding to the level on which, aeons and aeons earlier, it died, and it continues its career. That, as I said, is the standard traditional teaching. It is difficult to make sense of it in modern scientific terms, and perhaps one should not try just yet.

Steve: So, from that, it would seem that, like, no death actually takes place but there is more of a transmigration of beings

S.: Yes, there is no death taking place in the absolute sense. Gampopa certainly does not mean by 'death' here he means the death of one particular embodiment, so to speak, of the mind, not death in an absolute sense. That does not take place. Well, yes, it does take place in the sense that a last death takes place, after one has gained Supreme Enlightenment in one's last birth. Otherwise, there is another birth and then another death, and so on. But even here in this popular account, we are treating a consciousness as though it was an object, a body; which is really inconsistent. But, again, we can't avoid it.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, when the being as it were gets drawn up into the higher state of consciousness, is that actually, in a sense, a dhyana state?

S.: From what tradition says, it would appear so; at least, superficially understood. I don't see myself how that can be the case. Therefore, I spoke of the being as it were being resolved back into a sort of seed state, and even as it were hibernating. One might even say that the consciousness, though in a sense on the higher level, can't really support it. Yes, it is reborn on that level, say as we might be reborn on this level, but we could exist on this level [only] in an unconscious state, in a sort of state of coma. Maybe something like that happens. [181] One can hardly imagine someone as it were automatically going into a high dhyana type experience just because there was nowhere else to go. That doesn't seem to make sense. But I am departing a little from tradition here though I must say I have not really studied the sources here very exhaustively, so perhaps I am not departing from tradition really. Perhaps we should not take too literally the statement that 'beings are reborn in the Brahmaloaka'. It is not that with full consciousness they are reborn there and enjoy that kind of meditative bliss.

Mark: You say that I think I have got it right you can't have just mind, you can't have a subject without an object. I was wondering about beings that live in the realms corresponding to the arupa dhyanas where there is no ... rupa. How is that possible?

S.: It is generally said that it is not that there is no rupa in the absolute sense, but that rupa exists on those levels in extremely subtle form. This is the usual explanation. Just as in the rupaloka the form is not gross material form, it is extremely subtle, refined form, in the case of the arupaloka it is even more refined; so fine we find it to be virtually imperceptible.

Barry: Bhante, I had imagined that on being reborn you were not restricted to the world system in which you had lived your previous life; so if there wasn't a suitable stage of evolution of the universe for you in this world system you would just be reborn in another world system where you could take an appropriate body.

S.: Well, Buddhist scriptures, especially the Mahayana sutras, do envisage the possibility of going from one world system to another, but mainly in the case of Bodhisattvas, [not] to speak of Buddhas. But not in the case of as it were ordinary beings. In a way, it would seem obvious that they should not be able to achieve that. I gave the example of hibernation; in the case of a hibernating animal, you could say, 'Why does he have to hibernate? Couldn't he migrate to a warmer part of the world?' But, by his very nature, he is limited to that particular area, his structure limits him to that particular area. So it is the same, one might say, with a being of that level or degree of development. All the possibilities of which they are able to take advantage in that stage of development exist within that particular universe.

Barry: But if there is, say, a human realm in another universe, and you had the potential for existing as a human being, couldn't you switch over?

S.: A universe in Buddhism is a very big place! It includes quite a number of what we call worlds, so, yes, you could cross over from one world to another; but there is a time when all those worlds are as it were no longer available and the whole cosmos enters on a period of disintegration and involution. To cross from one universe of worlds in that sense according to tradition is the prerogative, so to speak, only of the highly advanced Bodhisattva. It is only he who has as it were the necessary spiritual spaceship at his disposal!

On the other hand, of course, some of the Mahayana sutras warn us not to take this whole idea of different universes so literally. They say that all universes are contained in each, and each in all, and so on; and what is space? what is time? Those are as difficult questions as the question of 'What is consciousness?' What it really all boils down to is that it is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to form a conceptual model that is fully adequate to our actual experience.

Chairman: Dharmadhara, do you have a point?

Dharmadhara: Yes. This talk of hibernation and ... reminded me of a question which I could have resolved (?) a while ago. I wonder if you could speculate about what, [182] with a person in a coma, for example, happens to the astral body and the subtle body of the person?

S.: Well, presumably, it is really alive and active somewhere. Some people do report out-of-the-body experiences when, so far as observers were concerned, they were just not

there, they were in a state of unconsciousness, in a state of coma; but they report that actually they were so to speak not only alive at the time but were conscious, and sometimes observing their own bodies and observing even people gathered around. So I think one has to admit of that possibility. Of course, we must not over-generalize. It may not be that everybody who is in a state of coma is in that sort of condition. They may be in a deep sleep-like state. At present, we seem to have no way of telling.

Prasannasiddhi: So would this mean that one spends a very large part of [one's] existence in a coma, and every once in a while you sort of emerge back in some human realm somewhere, get on with, say, a billion years of spiritual life, and back you go into a coma, for a few more trillion years?

S.: Well, in a sense, this is what happens. After all, it is what happens every day, every night. It is only the same sort of pattern on a vaster scale, one might say. You need a period of rest. After you have spent several million, or even billion, years in the universe and you have experienced perhaps, according to tradition, hundreds or millions of births, you would probably feel like a rest; you would probably lapse back into a coma-like state for a few million years quite happily. This is the way in which tradition presents the picture as though you have got, during this life itself, the alternation of waking and sleeping with day and night; and then in between lives there is a sort of period of rest in the bardo or perhaps even on deva like planes, when you are as it were reborn on those planes in between human lives. And then, at the end of each cosmic cycle, there is a period of even profounder rest, one might say, when the whole universe to which you belong or of which you are a part is in a state of complete quiescence. That is the general picture that emerges from the Buddhist texts, at least as popularly presented. It doesn't seem impossible. Part of the picture squares with our own experience.

Prasannasiddhi: However, if you were to develop spiritually, would this mean you in a sense jumped the process and managed to avoid the 'coma', and if you achieved the Transcendental you wouldn't enter a coma at all?

S.: It is as though there is a sort of, in that case, a Spiral Path which is cutting across the cyclical path. The two are going on at the same time, and it may be that you come to the end, so to speak, of the Spiral Path before you come to the end of the cycle. If you are well advanced on the Spiral Path, and your universe happens to come to an end, it may be, according to the Mahayana sutras, that you can, as an advanced Bodhisattva, so to speak, transfer to another universe and continue your development on the Spiral Path within the confines of that universe.

Chairman: We move to a different question now.

S.: How are we getting on with the questions?

Chairman: We are getting on quite well. We've got three questions well, there will actually be a fourth question at the end of all this. The next one is Dharmadhara's.

Dharmadhara: In your series of talks on the Higher Evolution, you mentioned two general theories to explain evolution: the random theory, like the monkey and the typewriter, and the vitalist theory, where there is some [183] directing force. On the radio recently I heard an

item which tended to disprove the random theory. There was a large computer which was programmed with all the information for how life could develop at random, and it took several years, I think, but they worked out that to start from scratch on earth to reach now it would have taken about 25 billion years: that is five times longer than it took.

S.: Yes, I think it has been worked out mathematically before. I think mathematically the random theory was disproved quite a long time ago, but it is interesting that it has also been disproved with the help of a computer.

Dharmadhara: Could you say more about the difference between the vitalist theory and the Buddhist explanation? Does that evidence support more [strongly] the vitalist or the Buddhist explanation?

S.: I think when I used the term vitalism in that talk I was using it in a very loose sense, a very loose manner, just as a convenient label for a non-mechanistic, non-random explanation; because, supposing evolution did not take place randomly, how did it take place? Clearly there was some kind of direction, some kind of, in a manner of speaking, purpose. So the use of the term vitalism is simply a way of giving expression to that fact. If something is not mechanical, if it is not inorganic, it can only be organic, one might say. If it is not a question of mechanism, it is only a question of life; it is only a question of something vital, i.e. vitalism. I was speaking in that quite broad, general sense. You could say, taking it in that very broad, general sense, that Buddhism, on the evolutionary side, so to speak, is a form of vitalism, inasmuch as it does not accept a mechanistic explanation of the universe. But that would be using the word vitalism in a very broad sense indeed. I was only concerned to make the transition from a mechanistic, from a random, explanation of the universe to the Buddhist one, and I did it via this concept of vitalism without going into it really very closely. But all theories of life that are non-mechanistic are really vitalistic, whether they like the label or not. They can be as it were materialistically vitalistic and spiritualistically vitalistic; or even, perhaps, transcendently vitalistic! Perhaps one needs to introduce those sort of distinctions. I think I said some months ago, when I took Study Group Leaders, again on the Higher Evolution, that I need to go over these lectures again and what shall I say? work them out in greater detail; because they are just sketches, really.

Chairman: The next question is from Mike.

Mike: Virtually the whole of ch.4 is given to the development of what Gampopa calls concentrated attention to the significance of the transitoriness of the composite. The term 'concentrated attention' is a translation of the word bhavana, which in this sense would normally be associated with meditation. Given this, and also the organized structure of the chapter, or of the ... it is given by Gampopa, (1) can we assume that these instructions were originally used as a form of meditation? (2) whether it was or not, do you think that within the FWBO or within the Order it could be validly used as a formal meditation on components.

S.: Oh, yes, because all the different categories of the Abhidharma, so to speak, including all the different subdivisions of the composite, have a practical purpose. One can review these in a concentrated mental state, review them in a state of upajara(?) samadhi, neighbourhood concentration, in such a way as to gain a deeper insight whether with a small 'i', initially, or a capital 'T' eventually into the [184] truth of the transitory nature of the composite. I was just

going to make a point here which I meant to have mentioned at some time or other. It is in the notes. Guenther says something about bhavana which is really quite incorrect, but I am not sure whether he says it here or somewhere else. He says what bhavana is it might have been somewhere else but he defines it in such a way as to completely exclude vipassana bhavana, which is also a bhavana. He defines it in such a way as to equate it entirely, exclusively, with the dhyanas; but the texts do consistently speak of samatha bhavana and vipassana bhavana bhavana meaning 'a making to become', 'a bringing into existence'.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, p.38, n.22.

S.: Yes, here we are: ..bhavana. This term implies concentrated attention to that which has been observed to be the nature of things. It is never discursive.' It is this that I quarrel with: 'it is never discursive'. This is quite wrong, because vipassana bhavana is discursive. This is the very nature of the process, one might say. One reviews these sort of categories, reviews this sort of analysis, in that state of neighbourhood concentration and in that way develops Insight. That sort of proceeding is, by definition, discursive. So it is not correct to say that bhavana is never discursive. Samatha bhavana is never discursive, if you except the first dhyana, but vipassana bhavana is always discursive, at least in its initial stages. So even Guenther does slip up sometimes.

Chairman: The next question was one which arose from the meeting that we had of the meeting that we had of the study leaders. I am going to ask Dhammarati to ask it.

Dhammarati: In the study groups most people were talking about ..., ...other beings, and it just struck me how many of the questions that came out of that were cosmological questions, and how few of them were to do with the experience. You could feel the experience pressing on you, as somehow none of the groups seemed to produce any questions

S.: Yes, well, the cosmology, in a way, is irrelevant; because whether you conceive of four levels or eight levels, or 10, or 100, they are all transitory; whether the worlds are round or square or octagonal as apparently some worlds are, according to a sutra I was reading recently doesn't really make any difference. They are all transitory. So it is the transitoriness that you need to concentrate on, without being misled by details of a particular cosmology, whether a modern scientific one or a traditional non-scientific one. It is the truth of impermanence or transitoriness that is of importance, and which is the real subject matter of the chapter.

Dhammarati: I think if you asked anybody in any of the groups, they would all tell you that they agreed with you, but somehow that never became the meat of the questions, and I kind of wondered why why you ... in the subject,

S.: Well, you would have to ask one another. It is no use asking me! Has anyone got any idea?

Prasannasiddhi: Isn't it not just that things are transitory but also that there is a relation of cause and effect between all things, and therefore people are interested in the cosmology because, OK, things may be transitory on a certain level, but there is some continuity in the whole process.

S.: Hm, I don't think you can really distinguish transitoriness and continuity in that way. In a way they are the same thing. I think basically the situation is that it is not easy to deal with transitoriness in the abstract. You have to say 'This is transitory' and 'That is transitory', and 'This world is transitory' and 'That world is transitory'; 'This level is transitory' and 'That level is transitory'. You would probably need a sort of framework to support well, not just to support the abstract notion of transitoriness, but something to give it concrete content, as they all say, so that you can expand and elaborate on the notion. So the cosmology enables you to do that. It doesn't matter which cosmology you select. You can say that the world of these gods is transitory, the world of those gods is transitory, the world of these other gods is transitory. It is in principle the same as if you say Saturn is transitory, and Jupiter is transitory, and Venus is transitory, and if you go into the whole of modern physics and astronomy and all the rest of it. You need just perhaps a framework that enables you to give expression to the concept of transitoriness in a more detailed way, to fill it out, to give it body as it were, to make it more concrete, so that you can get a better grasp of it, a better hold on it. Even so, you don't really need to discuss the why and wherefore of a particular cosmology in order to do that. You just take that particular pattern, that particular schema as it were and use it to elaborate, to deepen your understanding of the concept of transitoriness. It doesn't really matter whether you take a flat world or a round world. The world is transitory in either case. It doesn't matter whether you are a Round-Earther or a Flat-Earther. (Apparently there are 150 Flat-Earthers still living; they have their headquarters in is it Dover or Hastings? One of those two places. There is a society still, the Flat Earth Society.)

Dhammarati: In my study group you could feel the gap between ... my habitual perception of myself as I ... and what the text was suggesting; almost you could feel a kind of spiritual pressure of that. But I cannot formulate any questions about how to close that gap. I can ask questions about 'What does this paragraph mean?' 'What does this concept imply?' But none of these really deal with the matter of closing the gap.

S.: The gap is only closed by practice. Especially if you, say, adopt a particular Abhidharma classification or analysis and you review that in meditation. This is what some of the vipassana traditions of meditation do; you go over the whole body, go through the mind, analysing and seeing that everything is characterized by unsatisfactoriness, impermanence, and lack of a permanent and unchanging soul or self. You drill yourself, as it were, in that way. But, even without doing that, if you are just aware during the course of the day, you can see how changeable you are; that your whole psychophysical organism is changing constantly, especially your mental state. In some cases it is changing every few seconds, isn't it? So you should not have any difficulty grasping the truth of transitoriness. Even your physical body changes. You take in (rest of session missing)

Tape 17 is a duplicate of Tape 16)

[186]

Tape 18, Side 1

Chairman: Tonight we come to the question and answer session which will deal with questions from ch.4, on the 'Instructions on the Transitoriness of the Composite' and the first of the questions on ch.5, 'The Vicious State of Samsara'. There are only a few questions, really, from yesterday, and they will come in between the others; it seems better ... The first question is from Pete, on hell.

Pete: There are two parts to this question: (1) Do these descriptions of the hells in ch.5 originate from the Buddha, or are they from ancient Indian tradition? (2) How literally do Tibetans or Indians take these descriptions? Do they consider the hells to be physically existent and geographically locatable?

S.: Take them one by one.

Pete: Do these descriptions of the hells originate from the Buddha, or are they from ancient Indian tradition?

S.: I think probably neither. I think it is very doubtful that they go back to the Buddha, but it would also seem that they are not exactly pre-Buddhistic either. It would seem that before the time of the Buddha people in India had comparatively hazy ideas about the afterlife, so I think we can probably say that these sort of detailed descriptions neither go back to the Buddha nor belong to pre-Buddhistic Indian tradition. What came after that?

Pete: How literally do Tibetans or Indians take these descriptions? Do they consider the hells to be physically existent and geographically locatable?

S.: I think formerly, at least I don't know about now Tibetans did take these descriptions quite literally. Then you go on to ask what was the latter part of that question?

Pete: Do they consider the hells to be physically existent

S.: Ah, what does one mean by 'physically' existent? They certainly do seem to regard them, or to have regarded them, as being located somewhere, in much the same way as this world itself is located somewhere. And some of the descriptions quoted in ch.5 seem to suggest that the hell realms are located spatially beneath the earth, much as Dante's are in *The Divine Comedy*. And then what do you go on to ask after that?

Pete: Well, it was the same thing really: 'are they geographically locatable?'

S.: Yes, they seem to have been regarded, at least by some Tibetans, as being geographically located; or according to some texts, or according to some traditions. : If the idea of the hells neither goes back to the Buddha nor to pre-Buddhistic tradition,

S.: Ah, I didn't say that the idea of the hells doesn't go back to the Buddha. I said that these particular descriptions in other words, these very detailed and [187] specific descriptions appear not to go back to the Buddha. I would not say that the idea of the hells doesn't go back to the Buddha, the general idea of the hells in the sense of states of suffering after death; though, of course, in the case of Buddhism, those states would be temporary, would be short-lived.

: So does the idea, the general idea, go back to the Buddha and pre-Buddhistic tradition?

S.: Pre-Buddhistic tradition? Probably; though, as I said, it is rather vague, the pre-Buddhistic tradition about karma and rebirth. One recalls that in one of the Upanishads, one of the earliest of the Upanishads which is usually considered to be pre-Buddhistic though that is beginning to be doubted now, the teaching of karma is presented as a mystery, something that

is known to very few people, and one does not in any case find in the Upanishads or in the Vedic literature very much information at all about the afterlife. It was usually thought that one either went to the moon to the world of the fathers or to the sun to the world of the gods.

Pavel: Bhante, if these descriptions of hell do not come from the Buddha or from pre-Buddhistic traditions either, where do they come from?

S.: Well, Guenther gives a clue, doesn't he, in one of the footnotes? He says something to the effect that the Tibetans were fond of fantasizing about these things! Perhaps that is not altogether fair, because perhaps the Indians were too. Perhaps one has to distinguish between the general principle and the specific form that the principle takes, or the specific form that the principle is given in the particular literature or in a particular tradition. I am sure that is going to lead on to another question. (Pause.)

Vessantara: Bhante, most of the hells seem to have Sanskrit names, so presumably it was fairly well worked out in India.

S.: Right, yes. The Tibetans, though, do seem to have filled in the details the details that weren't given rather lovingly, one might say!

Chairman: We do have other questions in the area, so they probably will cover [it]. Mike, has your question been answered?

Mike: I am not sure. I was just going to ask: Do the hell realms actually exist as a separate realm from the human, where one can be reborn not as a human being in any form but as a distinct hell being?

S.: Let's take that little by little.

Mike: Do the hell realms actually exist as a separate realm from the human?

S.: That does raise the question of what one means by 'actually exist', or even what one means by 'exist'. But let us take it that one is asking whether the hell realms exist in the same way that the world exists, howsoever it may be that the world exists. And the answer to that is definitely yes, in Buddhist tradition those worlds are regarded as existing in that sense, whatever it may be. In other words, the hell realms are not regarded simply as representations or concretizations, as it were, of subjective states experienced by human beings in this world. That is not the traditional teaching. So, in a way, that answers the question; in a way, it doesn't, because in order to answer the question fully that is to say, in order, among other things, to answer the question whether the hell realms have a real existence, an actual existence one has to go into the general question of [188] what one means by 'actual existence', whether of the hell realms or any other realms. But the traditional Buddhist teaching certainly is that this world exists as a realm, the realm of human beings, the animal realm exists, the preta realm exists, the asura realm exists, the hell realm exists, and the world or worlds of the gods also exist all, in principle, in the same sense, so that if one is real the others are real, if one is actual the others are actual, if one is not real the others are not real, if one is not actual the others are not actual. The degree of reality, so to speak, that attaches to one attaches to all. This is the traditional teaching. That's not the whole of the question; what were the other parts of it?

Mike: I was asking, if these realms exist, whether one can be reborn not as a human being but as a distinct hell being so

S.: The traditional teaching, therefore, is that there is the possibility of rebirth from the human state into one or another of these other realms or other worlds, in much the same way as one is or has been reborn or born into this world. Again, that is the traditional teaching.

Dhammarati: Is there a discrepancy creeping in here? I seem to remember seeing somewhere 'once a human being always a human being', even a very degraded human being, but Gampopa seems to be spending a great deal of time in describing the options available to you. So is there a discrepancy between Gampopa's position and yours?

S.: It depends what you mean by a human being. Again, the general Buddhist teaching, the general Buddhist tradition is that you, the reincarnating consciousness, let us say not attaching too much importance to that phrase the reincarnating consciousness appears in, say, now the human world, taking on a human form, now in the animal world, taking on an animal form, now in an angelic or deva-like world, taking on an angelic form; and so on. So you cannot speak of it as being essentially any of those things. If it is anything, essentially, it is just a stream of consciousness. The human body, the animal body, the angelic body, these all represent temporary manifestations; they pertain to form, not to essence, so to speak. Not that there is a fixed unchanging essence, of course; it is a process, a stream of consciousness.

Dhammarati: And, as I have understood references in the ... seminars book, I have read them as suggesting that a range of mental states, a stream of consciousness reborn as a human being, can go through isn't going to take it outside all that we traditionally see as the human realm, that you are not necessarily likely to be reincarnated as an animal or S.: Whatever evidence we do have does suggest that you tend to be reborn in former surroundings; whatever evidence we have I am going to go into this, perhaps, a little later on in response to some other question, I hope whatever evidence we have suggests that at present, at least, the chances in the case of a human being are for rather than against rebirth as a human being after death. But even that does not necessarily mean that that reincarnating consciousness is as it were essentially human; because again, as I said its humanness is the result of its becoming embodied in a particular way, within a particular set of conditions.

Pavel: Bhante, what is the source of knowledge about realms, and is there any way we can get knowledge about realms other than from tradition and scriptures?

S.: This is to some extent the question that I was anticipating. One has, of course, the scriptures; one has, of course, tradition; and I did say, at the very [189] end, I think, of that lecture I gave on 'Karma and Rebirth' that the whole subject needs, really, reassessment. It does seem that, in the literature not excluding the canonical literature there were certain things, certain teachings, certain statements, in connection with the question of karma and rebirth which seem to be inconsistent with certain things that we now know. So there needs to be a sort of process of sorting out. There are, for instance, some statements which we can accept quite literally, others which seem to be meant to be taken metaphorically or symbolically, others which just seem to be the result of popular belief and are just plain wrong. We have to try to sort out all that. But you also asked whether there are any other sources of information with regard to rebirth or reincarnation, previous lives. Nowadays there would appear to be, because the whole subject in the course of the last few decades has been

investigated or begun to be investigated on what one can only describe as a sort of scientific or semi-scientific basis. There are quite a few researchers who have been gathering empirical evidence which seems to point in the direction of rebirth, collecting case histories which are not only recorded but which are checked up on. I believe several thousand such case histories have now been recorded and checked up on by various workers in this field. Then, of course, there are people who are working in the field of hypnotism and who claim to be able to make people or help people regress under hypnotism to previous lives. Again, however interesting and colourful such alleged recollections may be, they don't constitute evidence for rebirth unless there is some independent objective corroboration; but there does seem to be that in quite a substantial number of cases, so there is a sort of growing body of evidence. And it would seem that whatever verified information we are able to gain from these sources has to be compared with the material dealing with this subject which we have in the Buddhist and perhaps other scriptures, so that we can sort out the true from the false; what is to be taken literally from what is to be taken metaphorically or symbolically and so on. But the whole process has only just started. But it would seem, as far as I can gather, from all this material, that the fact of rebirth or the fact of karma and rebirth because the two are rather distinct is being placed on a more and more solid and incontestable foundation. That would seem to be the trend. But it would also seem that there are certain rather popular traditional Buddhist views, not necessarily found in the scriptures, which may have to go. There is a little book I want to mention in this connection, which I brought with me and which I read recently. It is called *Rebirth and the Western Buddhist*, and it's by someone called Martin Willson. It is published by Wisdom Publications. It is only a small book, it is less than 60 pages, but it covers the whole area in a quite comprehensive way. The author is quite scholarly, he is quite critical; he has been convinced of the truth of rebirth, he is himself a Buddhist. He also has some very interesting things to say, some rather critical things, about traditional Tibetan logical arguments in favour of rebirth, including some which have been approved or passed by the Dalai Lama; he faults the logic, including the Dalai Lama's logic, quite definitely! Nonetheless, he does regard the fact of karma and rebirth as having been established. I am not in a position to lend anybody this book at the moment because I am thinking of writing a review on it, a short one, for the Newsletter, because I think it is a very useful book indeed, a worthwhile book, and also has the advantage of being short. But if I am able to write this little review, people are free to borrow the book from me afterwards; otherwise you can try to get hold of a copy when you get back. It is well worth reading. The author, by the way, does take the view that you can hardly be a Buddhist without believing in karma and rebirth. Though that does not necessarily mean accepting every statement on the subject of karma and rebirth contained in the Buddhist scriptures, especially as some of those statements apparently are incompatible with one another.

[190]

Chairman: We still have a few more questions relating to the hell realms; we have chosen Dhammarati's question.

Dhammarati: In the group today we were discussing the practical advantage of the teaching of hell, and the group came up with a number of reasons why it was a good idea to have the concept of hell that emphasized the consequence of not practising; that it was an incentive to compassion for somebody who was emotionally positive; that the Catholic church had really wasted away since they scrapped hell as an effective concept. There were a number of arguments people felt recommended hell as a useful dharmic teaching. But others held that maturity(?) called this whole thing into question, how useful as a spiritual teaching the idea of

hell was.

S.: Well, of course, usefulness is one thing; truth or untruth is another, unless of course you accept a purely pragmatic theory of truth, like that of William James. That is another matter; I take it that we don't Buddhism certainly doesn't. So the question of the truth of hell, so to speak, is quite a different question from the psychological question of its usefulness. If there is not such a thing as the truth of hell, even its usefulness is called into question because, in that case, you have to impose on people a useful fiction; which, of course, Plato, in *The Republic*, I believe, recommends the rulers to do. It doesn't sound very democratic but there we are. Plato didn't believe in democracy anyway. So is it useful to believe in hell? Well, I suppose it depends to what extent. I think I can say that I do know, even within the Movement perhaps even within the Order people who have not been helped in the past by the traditional Catholic teaching about hell. One must remember, of course, that in Catholicism, as in Christianity generally, with the exception, I believe, of the Seventh Day Adventists and people like that, hell is eternal; and that is rather a different thing from the Buddhist hells, because, though they may go on for a very, very long time Gampopa does go into that, doesn't he? they don't go on for ever; and there is a tremendous difference between a billion billion years and eternity. If you are in hell just for a billion billion years, there is some room for hope! But not if you are in hell for eternity, which seems to me to be really a quite dreadful concept. I really wonder how anybody could ever have thought, even, of the idea. I think actually some of the ideas about hell in Gampopa's chapter are pretty appalling, too. In terms of time, I would personally consider them to be grossly exaggerated. I cannot imagine even the most industriously wicked person, in the course of a single lifetime, committing enough evil actions to justify a spell in one of those hells of that duration not even Hitler or Devadatta or Judas Iscariot or Tamerlane or Crippen or whoever! One can't feel that any of them would have deserved a sojourn in hell of that duration. Where did that leave us? I have wandered a little from the point!

Dhammarati: The original question was about how you saw hell, as a sort of spiritual concept.

S.: I think it depends on the individual. For a very sensitive person, I think the prospect of hell, or even purgatory, can be really quite terrifying and can stultify them, can immobilise them. In the case of another person of a more robust temperament, it might have a quite bracing and stimulating effect. But then you can't go teaching hell to this person and not teaching it to that person; at a Centre you can't have a class for those for whom hell is useful and another class for those for whom hell is not useful. You have to adopt a sort of standard approach, and I think that standard approach consists simply in teaching that, under

the law of karma, attachment and craving do result in suffering. I think probably it is not necessary to go into picturesque and colourful details about the nature of that suffering, and it does seem that those who describe the torments of hell in any detail do so with a certain zest which is rather suspicious. You probably [191] remember the sermon of the Catholic Father to some retreatants as described in James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. If you want a taste of the Catholic teaching about not just hell but the 'Four Last Things', just read that particular chapter. It is very well written; the priest was apparently a very good speaker, a very good preacher, and he really succeeded in putting the fear of hell into those boys. It didn't prevent them going a bit astray later on certainly not James Joyce! But some trace of it no doubt lingers; some little whiff of brimstone and sulphur amidst the incense, which perhaps troubles you at times; and perhaps, in the case of some sensitive souls, gives you a

really guilty conscience and prevents you enjoying yourself to any extent.

Dhammarati: So why do you think that Gampopa spends so much time elaborating?

S.: I think personally that the teaching of hell, taken beyond a certain point, is simply a technique of social control; and probably it has been necessary in the past, but I think it is quite unfortunate. I think it unfortunate that you have to terrify people into being good, or even just being decent, through the threat of eternal punishment. It didn't always work, even in the Middle Ages. Every preacher, almost, throughout the Middle Ages, was denouncing the people for their sins, and I get the impression they were far more sinful during the Middle Ages than they are now. They were sinning on a grand scale, in a very colourful way, not the drab, colourless little sins you get nowadays! In some ways, Benvenuto Cellini was quite representative, quite characteristic of his age well, his age wasn't the Middle Ages; the fine bloom, as it were, had been taken off sin by his time; but he did pretty well. But some people in the Middle Ages did such extraordinary things; the Seven Deadly Sins really had a very good time, it would seem. I think people are much more respectable now than they were in the Middle Ages. So I get the impression that the church, with its very vigorous teaching of hell, was only just able to keep things under control. So I think that probably the teaching about hell, whether in Christianity or in Buddhism or in Islam, beyond a certain point was simply more or less a technique of social control, which seems to be almost necessary. Sometimes contemporary theologians point to the Holocaust, in the sense of the wholesale destruction of the European Jews, as an example of what man is capable of when all moral restraints are removed, and perhaps they have a point. Because in the Middle Ages, you might say, they didn't have such a well-organized police force; even in Britain, it was not until the middle of the last century that we had a proper police force. So if you don't have a proper police force and you don't have a properly organized secret police and you don't have a properly organized army you don't even have an Inquisition what have you got to fall back on? You have got to fall back on ideology; you have got to fall back on, perhaps, the teaching about hell. Even Plato considered that to be useful. I think I'm afraid this is quite a large part of the story.

Gerry: Bhante, Dhammarati mentioned the toothlessness of Christianity now since the removal of the teaching of hell. Could you say why they did it, why this has happened? This has had ramifications

S.: But they haven't given it up. The teaching about hell, including the eternity of hell, is still fully a part of Catholic teaching.

Gerry: But it is not emphasized as

S.: No, it is not emphasized quite so much. Well, some preachers emphasize it; some don't. If they don't, it seems to be just well, we would say a skilful means. Perhaps they know that people, even Catholics nowadays, are a little sceptical about the teaching of eternal punishment and about hellfire. So they soften it a bit. But it is still fully a part of official Catholic teaching, doctrine. [192] You are allowed to hope that all beings may be saved, but you are not allowed to be very sure about it!

Danavira: I was just wondering about what you were saying about sin in the Middle Ages. If hell was a method of social control, one could say that the opposite could become true, in that

the more hell was put forward the more people tended to sin.

S.: Descend to ?

Danavira: Well, the more hell was put forward to control them, in actual fact the more people would tend to sin. I was wondering if

S.: One must not forget that it was not just a question of putting hell forward, but also putting heaven forward. If hell was the stick, heaven was the carrot. And, in the case of Buddhism, there are also heavens, and one must say, in the case of some, anyway, popular Buddhist teaching, the Buddhist [heavens] were no doubt dangled in front of the noses of the faithful like so many carrots. Again, the teaching of heaven though, one might say, true in principle could be utilized as a technique of social control in much the same way. But it doesn't seem to work very much now. It didn't work all that well even at that time, it would seem.

Danavira: I suppose what I mean is, if you beat people, in a sense, to try to control them, you usually inspire the opposite of what you are aiming at.

S.: I don't think one can generalize to that extent. In the case of certain people, that might be the reaction. Some people are more cussed than others. But some people would just be overwhelmed, just be annihilated, as it were. I think the particular reaction would depend very much on the individual. Sometimes, of course, you just try to circumvent and, of course, the church in the Middle Ages did provide all sorts of ways of circumventing, because you could confess, you could do penance. I think nowadays very few people have an actual fear of hell in the West, but there still lurks a sort of uncomfortable feeling. People are not too sure about it; there might be something in it. And hell often seems to loom rather larger than heaven, as it did in the case of Samuel Johnson, for instance. He wasn't even brought up as a Catholic, he was brought up as a member of the Church of England, but by a mother with rather Calvinistic inclinations, and he was terrified of going to hell all through his life; though he led a rather conspicuously good life, one would have thought. Anyway, perhaps that is enough about hell for the time being. Unless it comes up in the form of another question.

Chairman: OK, so the next question, which is in the same area, is Prakasha's question.

Prakasha: I have heard it said that with an expansion of consciousness there is a corresponding expansion of the sense of time. Thus the gods live much longer than those in the human realm. How is it that in the text the hell beings live for vast periods of time, much longer than the gods.

S.: This is rather a curious feature of the various texts cited. I can't really say. But, as I have already indicated, I don't think one can take these particular durations, as given, at all literally. I think the overall point, the general point, which perhaps one needs to take seriously, is that time is relative. I have mentioned before that, in the course of a dream, we can go through a whole series of experiences which may seem to take days, months, even years; but we wake up and we find that we have been asleep only for a few minutes. So it is in this sort of sense that it is said [that] a year of human life is a day of the gods, and so on; indicating that in different worlds the time sense or the time scale is [193] different. But how seriously the details of that are to be taken is quite another matter. I think we always have to distinguish the general philosophical principle involved, where there is a philosophical principle, from its

particular expression, especially in terms of figures.

Chairman: The next question is of a different type. It is Buddhadasa's.

Buddhadasa: This question begins with hell, but it might end up out of it. It is T to do with the paragraph on p.60, about halfway down. There mention is made of the traditional ... about whether guardians of the hell realms are sentient beings in their own right or whether they are only creations of an evil mind or, as we would more likely say today, projections or hallucinations. Without necessarily denying the former, but given that the latter point of view is generally more acceptable, do you think it is possible nevertheless for the projections of one's own mind to become independently sentient? Can the inanimate objects be made to become animate? Can life be created?

S.: Go through that bit by bit.

Buddhadasa: Without necessarily denying the former, but given that the latter point of view is generally more acceptable, do you think it is possible nevertheless for projections of one's own mind to become independently sentient?

S.: For projections of one's own mind to become independently sentient first of all, that depends on what one means by projection of one's own mind, and then on what one means by independently sentient. One recollects in this connection some rather interesting accounts in one of Alexandra David-Neel's books.

Buddhadasa: We were thinking of that, yes.

S.: About tulpas. And if one takes literally, or accepts as truthful, her accounts, it would suggest that this can in fact happen. I see no reason for doubting her; I don't think she was romancing. But it isn't quite clear from her accounts exactly what happened. I haven't read those books for many years, but I think I had the impression at the time that the beings created were only as it were relatively independent; but they could get out of control. But even when they got out of control and became as it were independent, they weren't like human beings; it was as though what had been created, out of as it were the substance of the yogi maybe the psychic substance of the yogi had been taken over by some non-human entity. That was the impression I think I had at the time. I won't be too sure, because I haven't read these things for 20 or 30 years. I can't recollect any other detailed account of any such experiences. So the evidence, though apparently reliable, is rather slender; but it would seem the possibility is not to be ruled out. Perhaps one can again refer to one's dream experience. When one dreams, everything that one experiences all the people, the beings that you encounter in your dreams are manufactured, as it were, out of your own let's say psychic substance, and I think, if you observe yourself carefully as you wake up out of a dream, you can see this process actually happening, and you can, while actually awake, continue to experience the dream objects or the dream person. You find that you then experience that dream object or dream person just as tangibly as you would have experienced them had they actually been an independent living being; which is rather interesting. And you can, if you are very careful, if you are very mindful, oscillate between the two; sinking back into the dream and then emerging into the waking state. That is to say, withdrawing that projection, as it were, [194] that particular creation, and then as it were projecting it again and experiencing it in all its apparent solidity, while you are actually awake. So this sort of experience gives one a lot of food for reflection.

You know all those traditions about incubi and succubi?

Buddhadasa: Huh?

S.: These arose, one assumes, out of the rather vivid sexual dreams that young men and young women also would have, and no doubt still have. One dreams that one is as it were attacked by a female figure, in the case of a male, a male figure in the case of a female; attacked as it were sexually, but definitely attacked or molested, in some way. And as one wakes up out of that dream one has the sort of experience I mentioned, of that dream-object or dream-person existing quite objectively, actually like a person; and as it were fleeing away. And this experience seems to have given rise to this belief in entities, beings, creatures, called incubi and succubi I forget which were the males and which were the females. But it is not merely subjective; that is why I use the expression 'psychic substance' or 'psychic stuff'. It is more than just a mere thought, a mere emotion. It is almost as though something quite literally is taken out of you on the subtle level, the subtle plane; as though that figure, that person, that being that you experienced, was an extension of or manufactured from, let's say, your own astral body, for the sake of giving it a term.

Tape 18, Side 2

Prasannasiddhi: Could this entity be actually experienced by someone else, this entity that has come from your dreams, would you say?

S.: I don't know about the entity coming from one's dream experience, if that is the right way of putting it; but as far as I remember, in the case of those entities let us use that expression created by Mme. David-Neel, they were experienced by other people, in fact many other people.

Buddhadasa: So, Bhante, can we look at the second part of this question? Can inanimate objects be made to become animate? I am thinking

S.: Well, again, there are these strange stories of stones or wooden constructions becoming animated with a bit of magical activity; one doesn't really know quite what to think. I have not investigated any of these things at first hand. I don't think I have even read any reliable accounts; but all sorts of strange stories come out of places like Africa and so on. I really can't say.

Buddhadasa: I know you have read a bit about gems and crystals, and I have heard that, in occult circles, crystals are regarded as the lowest form of life. Have you any comments to make about that?

S.: I am not sure about that. I am not sure even what science, what crystallography would have to say about crystals. They are certainly very curious things. But it is generally believed, to the best of my knowledge, that gemstones of all kinds emit particular radiations, and I have heard it said in India that the reason why the Himalayas have such a beneficial spiritual, or at least psychological or psychical, effect upon people is that they are so full of gemstones. But this is merely something that I have heard. I am not in a position to either ratify it or otherwise. All these things require further investigation.

Dhammarati: This paragraph of Gampopa's, where he is saying that the hell beings are not sentient beings, [but] 'there arises in their minds the appearance of such hellish beings' would that tie up with the idea of hells as somehow being like [195] apparently objective manifestations of your own state of mind? Is Gampopa suggesting that there is something different going on here from what usually happens on ... objective-correlative state of mind?

S.: There does seem to be a difference of opinion in the Buddhist texts themselves. He seems to opt for the second view which is certainly supported by some texts. In much the same way, there are texts which say that the birds, for instance, in the Pure Land Sukhavati, which sing songs of the Dharma, are all created magically by the power of Amitabha and are not actually sentient beings, or not actually anyway birds. One could look on the hell realms from this point of view as having the reality of dreams, but dreams of the type that I have just mentioned in connection with incubi and succubi particularly.

Dhammarati: Would that make them something less real, less objectively real, than the one that we are learning of here?

S.: Again, that depends what one means by real, even objectively real. Because if you did actually suffer, presumably they would be real; it would be a very academic question to you whether they were 'really there' or not, if actually you did suffer! The suffering is actual, even if not real! If you are suffering from actual suffering, it is not much of a consolation to be told that it is not real. It is like being told that your toothache is illusory; well, perhaps it is, but you feel it all the same and you need an illusory dentist to take out that illusory tooth and rid you of that illusory toothache.

Prasannasiddhi: But isn't the suffering that, say, you experience in dreams say you have had your leg chopped off in a dream it is a completely different sort of experience from if it happens in real life?

S.: Well, yes and no. I do think that there are some experiences which you have in dreams, pleasurable or painful, which are just as intense and just as actual (to avoid the use of the word real) as you have in your so-called real life. I think you can have just as terrible and just as miserable experiences; sometimes even more so. But I think if someone wakes up after some such experience, it is not much of a consolation to be told 'It's only a dream.' Because while it lasted it was very actual, if not real, and can have a very great effect. Some people believe and the author I referred to, Martin Willson, mentions this that some at least of the experiences you have in dreams can be re-livings of experiences belonging to previous lives; which, of course, can be very real indeed. Imaginary pains can be just as actual as real ones. So, from the point of view of suffering, it is really quite academic, so far as the hell-being the being in hell is concerned, whether the beings who are tormenting him are real or not; because the torment is actual, and that is really the whole point of the ... that you do suffer, regardless of whether the agents of that suffering are real agents or, so to speak, only actual agents, or even only imagined agents.

Lalitaratna: Bhante, I have sometimes found not often that I have put dream images into the metta bhavana, when it has been very hostile or something like that. Does that sound sensible, or is that ?

S.: Yes, supposing you do dream of someone maybe someone you know in real life or not and

you dream that you hate him and you dream that you kill him; well, he is an enemy; so there is that sort of potential for enmity, for hatred, in you which has found that particular objective expression. So I think putting that dream person that you killed in the dream in your metta bhavana is probably quite a good idea. You are probably then getting at the roots of anger and hatred in your own mind, not just tackling the surface feelings. In the same way, you can [196] have dreams, if they are dreams, of angelic beings, and it is well to recall those and dwell upon them if you possibly can.

Dharmadhara: How literally do you yourself take the existence of hell realms?

S.: I am not sure; I think I have got one of those minds that can remain quite happily suspended between belief and disbelief in the literal sense. Not everybody is like that. A lot of people like to know 'Is it real or is it not real? Is it true or is it not true?' I don't really have quite that sort of mind, so I am not really bothered. But I take it as substantially true; to what extent the stories are true, I don't particularly bother, but broadly speaking, yes, I believe in karma, I believe in rebirth; I think I always have done, but without insisting on the doctrine of karma or the doctrine of rebirth as it has come down to us from tradition in a very rigid manner.

Dharmadhara: I find it easier to accept the existence of deva realms, for example. I am not quite sure how literally to take the tradition.

S.: Well, one could take the existence of hell realms as literally as you take the existence of the deva realms. It is only logical; it is not very logical to believe in the deva realms and not in the hell realms, because the deva realms are the result of, let us say, good deeds, and if you are free to commit good deeds presumably you are free to commit bad deeds, and if committing good deeds results in the experience of deva realms why should not [committing] bad deeds result in the experience of the opposite? So it seems quite logical to connect the two in that way.

Dharmadhara: We were saying that the hell realms are probably souped up quite a bit by creative minds. How much do you think they could be souped up?

S.: Oh, I think almost infinitely, if one can use such an expression. It depends how vivid your imagination is or, if one wants to be a little cynical, how sadistic you are. I have never felt any necessity to dwell on the details of the hell realms at all. I am rather disinclined, I think, by temperament to do so. I don't remember ever giving any sort of fiery discourse on the hell realms; but I have touched, I believe, from time to time on the heavenly realms.

John: A little while ago, Bhante, you said that in the Middle Ages, social control was ideological. Has that just been replaced by the threat of actual earthly punishment, or is it more complicated than that?

S.: It probably is more complicated than that, but I think on the whole there has been a shift from what we might call ideological control to what we might call, say, organizational control backed up by a greater degree of force. But that is a very big generalization, and probably the whole subject would require, again, further investigation. But there is no doubt that a type of control what I call ideological control or technique of control existed in the Middle Ages and was operative to some extent, even though perhaps not wholly successfully in a way that it is

not, seemingly, operative now in the West, in Europe, in America.

Chairman: Barry, I think you had a question ... on the Buddhist concept of social control?

Barry: No...

S.: But perhaps I will say a little bit more about it, at least one point. I think control always, on the whole, is ideological rather than non-ideological; in the sense I think I have touched on this before let us say you have a law-abiding majority and a non-law-abiding minority. If the minority is very small, you can [197] keep them under control forcibly; the majority, either directly or through its representatives, can keep them under control. But how are you to control the majority who, after all, are of the same substance, the same flesh and blood and brain, as the minority? You can only control the majority as it were by ideology, by philosophy, by religion, by belief of some kind. So I think it is only a difference of degree as between now and the Middle Ages. We may have greater recourse to control by force through the police and so on, but I think control still mainly is ideological. It is some form of ideology, some form of philosophy or religion, or even just inertia, that keeps people good, so to speak.

John(?): Do you think ... control through manipulating them by greed?

S.: Oh yes, but of course this is related to an ideology, isn't it, a secular ideology? There is the admiss ideology. Consumerism; that is an ideology, you might say.

Chairman: We now have a question from Jarmo.

Jarmo: Bhante, in a taped lecture called 'Between Twin Sala Trees,' you mention this experience of your friend ..., and the encounters with these jogis. I have got four questions about these jogis.

- 1) What are the jogis?
- 2) Do they follow any spiritual practices and are they part of Buddhist tradition?
- 3) What happens as they do the ritual called collecting the souls of the dead?
- 4) Should we start a modern jogic tradition in the West?

S.: Let's have the questions one by one.

Jarmo: What are the jogis?

S.: I wasn't able to find out very much about them; all this happened years and years ago, decades ago. To the best of my knowledge and recollection, the jogis are first of all a Hindu caste though, of course, one must remember that in Nepalese castes Buddhism has been influenced by Hinduism and Hinduism has been influenced by Buddhism but to the best of my recollection they are a Hindu caste in Nepal. I believe that they are quite a small caste, and I believe that they are high-caste rather than low-caste; and that outwardly they are, on ordinary occasions, indistinguishable from other people. Apparently, by tradition, they have

this particular responsibility, that is to say of collecting the souls of the dead, and they have been given this responsibility, apparently again to the best of my knowledge and recollection by the Nepal Durbar, that is to say, by the king, who is of course believed to be an incarnation of Vishnu. That is the popular belief in Nepal. So what happens is, there is a sort of rota system, and every adult male belonging to this caste has to take a turn of doing this work. He gives up his usual job and he puts on the dress of a jogi, and he travels around the Himalayan area collecting the souls. As far as I remember, they are collected on the night of the new moon, I think it was; what the Hindus call amabasya(?), when the moon is at its darkest. And I think I got the impression that they were collected so as to prevent them doing any harm. They went around, as far as I remember, dressed in a white garment, a Hindu-style garment, white turban; perhaps a staff, I am not sure, but they certainly had a ram's horn trumpet, and they blew on that trumpet, that horn sort of curved, you know, a ram's horn trumpet blew at night and [198] collected the souls of the dead. The Nepalese people, who of course were quite familiar with them, were quite scared of these jogis and quite afraid of them. I was told several stories about them. I mentioned the story that dogs were very afraid of them, and even fierce dogs never attacked them, just ran away, when they roamed around at midnight on the amabasya day collecting these souls and blowing their horns. I have heard the horn blowing not half a mile away from my own vihara. I think that is because I asked about it. And they come round in the morning in those places where they have been collecting the souls, and they have to beg. They may actually be quite well-to-do people, but on that occasion, in that connection, apparently they have to beg; whether just for the sake of begging or to support themselves I don't know, I never inquired. But you have to give them some grain and a few small coins; that is the tradition. So they go from house to house in the morning, wherever they have gone around collecting the souls of the dead the previous night, and they beg in this way. People give them are very afraid of them and very glad to see them go. So one happened to come to the vihara one morning, and I knew about the jogis, so I was quite interested to talk to him, and my servants and disciples wouldn't stay anywhere near; they brought the offering in and then fled. So I told him to sit down and I talked with him I really can't remember the conversation, but I just asked him a few questions about how long he had been working, and I might even have picked up some of these details from him, I can't really remember. But I remember that he impressed me as a very strange person, as you would expect someone having to do with the souls of the dead; he was very strange. I believe they were all like that, at least when they were performing their duties. And, as far as I remember, he looked more like an Indian than a Nepali, so perhaps he was a high-caste Nepalese of predominantly Indian descent. I don't remember that I found out anything about their training; they must have had some kind of training, but I have no idea what it was. So these were the jogis. Was there any other question there?

Jarmo: Yes

S.: I have only found one reference to them since, in a book about Nepal, but it only referred to them, it didn't give any proper information. But no doubt it would be possible to find out more.

Jarmo: So he didn't belong to the Buddhist tradition?

S.: I don't think so, no. The word jogis means for some reason or other, the Nepalese pronounce yogi as jogi they were called jogis; they were said to belong to the jogi caste. But it was etymologically the same word as yogi. Jarmo: And what happens when they collect the

souls of the dead?

S.: Well, they just collect them. I didn't go into any details, as far as I remember. They take them with them back I gather; again, I am not sure back to Nepal. What they do with them there I don't know, whether there is a sort of psychic dustbin that they put them in, I don't know. But they collected them and took them away, they took them away. The Nepalese profoundly believed in these things, and as I said were really terrified of the jogis. And I noticed, shortly before I left Kalimpong, they seemed to be coming around more and more frequently. Formerly, I would hear them maybe every year or two; but I am sure that, towards the end of my stay, they were coming along practically every month, and I never was able to find out the reason for this, though I did notice it.

: Perhaps you gave them money?

[199]

S.: No, no, no. I don't think that was the reason. They get so little; just a few of the smallest coins. They had to do it as a duty; I gather they didn't particularly like doing it or want to do it, but it was the custom, it was tradition. They were required by the Durbar to do it, by the government. But it may be not so surprising. Even in England we commemorate the dead with victory celebrations; we had it just a few years ago after the Falklands war, with a service in St Paul's cathedral. One could say that the English people were praying for the souls of the dead, and so on and so forth; well, is it really in a way all that different? It was an official occasion. But I don't think I can remember anything more than that.

Chairman: There was a fourth part to your question.

Jarmo: Well it isn't a Buddhist tradition, so I don't know whether it relates to this at all; but I asked whether we should start a modern 'jogic' tradition in the West.

S.: I really don't know. Are we bothered by ghosts? One does hear, here and there, of houses which are haunted. Several houses I lived in in Kalimpong were supposed to be haunted. My students used to see figures; in fact, yes, several of them saw figures, but they used to say that these things appeared while I was away, but when I was there they never came! At one of the places I stayed in Kalimpong they regularly used to see ghostly figures walking on the roof at night. But as soon as I came back from Calcutta or Bombay, they would just stop, they said. So I really don't know. In this way, there are allegedly haunted houses in Britain; it might be useful to have someone going around tidying them up or whatever! But perhaps we have got a lot more things to do before we can think about that. It would probably be more useful to preach the Dharma. According to tradition, the spirits also hear that.

: I know that the spiritualists might be uncomfortable the sort of people who have haunted houses and have called upon mediums, trying to exorcise the houses of the ghosts.

S.: Well, perhaps the spiritualists are the jogis; perhaps we don't need to bother! Perhaps you could do a sort of jogi training under the auspices of your spiritualist friends, and then you wouldn't have to bother!

: I'll think about that.

S.: Any more questions? How are we getting on?

Chairman: We are more than halfway through. We had 21 to start with

S.: Oh, that's quite good.

Chairman: and we have now done 7 of those questions. (?)

S.: Oh. Come on, then.

Chairman: The next question comes from Prakasha.

Prakasha: There seem to be a number of different traditions concerning the intervals between rebirths. I gather that with the Theravada it is instantaneous. The Bardo Thodol mentions 49 days. Tibetan tulkus seem to be reborn within one, two, perhaps up to five years. On the other hand, Arthur Guirdham mentions in one of his books a succession of lives Roman, Celtic, Cathar, Napoleonic so there seem to be intervals of [200] several hundred years between each rebirth. So the question is: (1) what is the interval between rebirths? (Laughter.) (2) how credible do you find Arthur Guirdham's accounts of his own rebirths?

S.: So what is the first question?

Prakasha: What is the interval between rebirths?

S.: The author of the book I mentioned a little while ago touches upon this. In the light of whatever empirical evidence we have, it would seem that the interval is variable. The evidence would seem to suggest perhaps it is only suggestive that we have in the world, or let us say connected with this world, an actually finite number of, let us say, souls, without quarrelling with that particular word. But, in the early ages of history and prehistory, it would seem, on this hypothesis, that the number of human bodies available, produced as a result of evolution, was strictly limited. So therefore there were fewer human bodies than there were souls do you see what I mean? So at that stage the interval, the length of time that you had to wait after dying from one human body before you could take on another human body, was quite long; perhaps even thousands of years. But as the number of available human bodies increased, the interval of waiting, as it were, became shorter and shorter, so that at present it is usually quite short. Empirical evidence would suggest weeks, months, years, but not really now longer than that. The empirical evidence does seem to point in this direction because, if people are regressed under hypnosis, the longer they go back into history, it would seem, the longer they have to wait in between births. It all does seem to fit in a rather interesting way, so perhaps that is the solution; that at least is an interesting hypothesis. But, yes, the empirical evidence does seem to point in some such direction; but, again, read this little book for further information. Also he gives references to the literature on the subject; one can follow it up if one wishes. There is quite a lot of literature on these things.

Prakasha: The second question is: how credible do you find Arthur Guirdham's accounts of his own rebirths?

S.: I have not read all of them. The author of this book apparently has found some quite credible, others not so credible. He gives his reasons again one can read the book.

Ray Bisson: If the number of souls is finite, does that suggest that the population of the world is finite?

S.: Yes, that suggests that either the population of the world will taper off, or that there will be this is at least, I presume, theoretically possible a multiplication of human bodies without souls. That possibility is not suggested by the source that I have read, but presumably it is a possibility. But it does seem that the world population is beginning to taper off. It might taper off at about 6 billion, shortly after the year 2000 I believe that is the present prediction, as far as we know.

Ray: So what would these human bodies be like without any souls? What sort of phenomenon could we expect to find?

S.: Well, they would be, no doubt, just human animals, without any spark of higher consciousness presumably. I have used, of course, the expression 'souls'; perhaps one should not take that too literally. Sometimes one suspects that some [201] of the people one meets outside the FWBO, I hasten to add! [have no souls]. There is also some interesting evidence cited by this same author to the effect that the soul does not necessarily enter the body to use that expression at the instant of conception; that it can even enter the body after birth. This is quite interesting. But, again, it is very difficult to arrive at any very definite and solid conclusions as yet, but empirical evidence is being gathered, it would seem.

Prasannasiddhi: What about animal bodies? Is there a limited number of animal souls, or ... basically ...?

S.: Again, according to this particular author, on the empirical evidence so far collected, rebirth of souls that have inhabited human bodies into animal bodies, bodies of higher animals, is comparatively rare. He says that there is no evidence to support one of the traditional Buddhist views to the effect that human birth is comparatively rare. It might be in the universe as a whole, but not within our particular historical framework. I think you had probably better all read this little book sooner or later, and maybe follow up with reading some of the sources he cites.

Chairman: Barry, did you still have a point?

Barry: It's been answered.

Jarmo: Bhante, is it possible that there is an input of human souls from other world systems ... ?

S.: This possibility has been considered. The author of this book does not mention it, but yes, it is sometimes mentioned in some sources. One can't really speculate about it.

Dhammarati: I heard some things about the Women's Convention with your report (?) suggesting that a single psychic continuum will [not?] necessarily always reincarnate in a single body, that for instance a couple of streams of consciousness could end up in the same body and a single consciousness could end up in a number of bodies. Would that not tend to be a different idea from that of a finite number of souls?

S.: That is true. As far as I remember, I didn't mention this in connection with rebirth as we have been discussing it, but in connection with different worlds where consciousness functions differently. In the Buddhist scriptures at least, in the canonical, I think in the Pali scriptures there are references to worlds other than the human world, maybe it was the heavenly world or worlds, where consciousness is one and bodies are many, or where consciousnesses are many and body is one, and so on. But we know, even on the human level, cases of multiple consciousness, as it is called, multiple personality. Among animals there seems to be a sort of collective consciousness. So perhaps this idea would in certain cases, in a modified form, perhaps to be understood as modifying what has been said about souls, as it were, being incarnated. Perhaps one is not always dealing with a single unitary entity.

Chairman: The next question is from Barry, on the lower evolution.

Barry: I was considering the human body with reference to your saying in Peace Is a Fire that it is not that man wills, but that will mans. This seems to give rise to a contradiction, in that you can have a very crude level of consciousness taking the form of a human body, and this body is at the same time a very complex and subtle organism. Is there therefore [202] some aspect of consciousness existing below the level of self-awareness that has intelligence, or can the Lower Evolution be completely explained in terms of the interaction of simple blind forces?

S.: When I spoke of Will as it were 'manning', I had in mind something similar to what I was talking about earlier, what I expressed in terms of the stream of consciousness finding various embodiments on different levels in different contexts. I was trying to stress, in both cases, that the stream of consciousness, or stream of psychic substance, was primary and the particular embodiment was secondary. One should consider the embodiment as belonging to the stream of consciousness, let us say, or the will, and not the other way round. That was mainly the point I was concerned to make.

Barry: All the same, it does seem that with the Lower Evolution you do have these very complex, subtle bodies with quite a crude level of consciousness inhabiting them. So I was wondering what the force is; it would seem to be an intelligent force, that actually goes to create the bodies.

S.: Well, I would not say that it was a mechanical force. But perhaps it would be more correct to speak of intelligence than of mechanism. But we also have, perhaps, to recognize that the intelligence is not necessarily conscious, though that might seem to be a contradiction in terms. The organs of our body function; we are not conscious of them. It is as though, at least, they have an intelligence of their own. Very often they are self-correcting, even self-healing. And it is not a blind mechanical process. If a car goes wrong, it doesn't heal itself, as I think everybody realizes sooner or later. But if the human body goes wrong, very often it can heal itself. It is as though an intelligence is there. Or one might even say an intelligence is there, but it isn't conscious. This has been discussed somewhere I can't remember at the moment where, but I read not so many months ago an account of intelligence which was not conscious. So perhaps we have to think along some such lines.

Barry: Would you say that is related to the idea you gave in the Higher Evolution series of this absolute consciousness that you posited behind the process of evolution, kind of drawing things upwards?

S.: That was a very metaphysical postulate, with all the disadvantages, not to say weaknesses, of a metaphysical postulate. I think one could say that there is empirical evidence for intelligence of the subconscious order as operating in, say, plants and animals. I think someone probably has to read up the literature on the subject and present us with some short papers that can be put into general circulation. I think there are (Rest of session missing.)

[203]

[Tape 19 is a duplicate of Tape 18. There are two copies of Tape 20.]

[.10.85 Tape 20, Side 1]

Chairman: Tonight we come to the second question and answer session on the chapter 'The Vicious State of Samsara', and we have two questions it has come down to two questions left over from the previous session, and another six questions from today: eight in all. The first question on the previous section is from Ray.

Ray: I can't remember how I was going to phrase the question, but it was something like: Do you think that a hedonistic way of life, or an ascetic or puritan way of life, is a greater springboard to the spiritual way of life?

S.: Well, it is doubtful whether either is exactly a springboard to the spiritual life; more of the nature of hindrances or sidetracks taking asceticism to represent one of the two extremes mentioned by the Buddha, and hedonism to represent the other. The Middle Way avoids them both. In this connection, perhaps people could not do better than to consult the book review I wrote a few years ago on Agehananda Bharati's *Light at the Centre*. That review is called 'Hedonism and the Spiritual Life'. I go into the whole question there, mainly from the point of view of hedonism. But, no, I wouldn't say that either asceticism in that sense nor hedonism was exactly a springboard for the spiritual life. It is the Middle Way which is the springboard for the spiritual life.

Ray: The question came up in a discussion over hedonism or asceticism, a discussion of what people thought would be a better springboard, given that the Middle Way would be the best way.

S.: I would still say neither. Get on to the Middle Way as quickly as you can! Neither hedonism nor asceticism is a springboard, in a sense; to the extent that you are involved in either you are just wasting your time. So better you abandon them both. It is almost like asking whether greed or hatred is more conducive to the spiritual life. Again, the answer is 'neither'. : Perhaps part of the question is which is a better starting point from which to try to get into the spiritual life. Are you in an easier position being, say, a hedonist than an ascetic or being that way inclined?

S.: I think you have to start from wherever you are. It is not easier to get into the spiritual life from any point other than from where you actually are! There is no point in getting to another point from which to start the spiritual life: you might as well start from where you are! So if you are at a starting point of hedonism, well, get away from that to the Middle Way. If you are at a starting point of asceticism, well, get away from that. Similarly with greed and hatred and delusion. It is difficult enough to get on to the spiritual path from the point where you actually are, [not] to speak of some other point where you aren't anyway!

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, the question partly arose from there was a certain view that hedonism was a fundamentally more healthy state to be in than a state of asceticism. (Laughter.)

S.: It might look like that in some cases, but I am rather inclined to doubt it! If you take hedonism and asceticism as opposites or as complementaries, and if you take one in the sense of the extreme of self-torture which the Buddha said was to be avoided and the other as the extreme of self-indulgence, there isn't really much [204] to choose between the two. Someone who follows the path of hedonism may look more attractive than one who follows the path of asceticism, but that is really, from a spiritual point of view, neither here nor there. It is really quite irrelevant. So, no, I am afraid I can't be induced to say anything in favour of hedonism, in the sense in which the term appears to be used. If you read the review I mentioned, I have taken hedonism there in a rather wider sense.

Buddhadasa: It has occurred to me I am not sure how to phrase this question how can there not be a qualitative difference between opposites? Can opposites be exactly, perfectly opposite each other? Because if they were, surely movement between them would not be possible, there would be a sort of stasis. I mean, metaphorically, it would seem to me that in a way white has got the edge on black.

S.: But white is not the complement of black; black is not the true opposite of white, being simply its privation or absence.

Buddhadasa: All right.

S.: You can say that blue is the complement of yellow, or red of green, but not white of black. But state the original proposition again.

Buddhadasa: I find it difficult to understand the concept that polar opposites are absolutely equal in every respect except in the fact that they are opposite. I don't see how a movement between them is possible in that case; there has to be, as I would conceive it at the moment, a qualitative difference between the two polar opposites.

S.: I am not sure what the question amounts to logically. What is a polar opposite as distinct from an opposite? Take this question of pleasure and pain. The common point, the common factor, is surely sensitivity; so if you are sensitive to pain you are sensitive to pleasure. Asceticism consists basically, I suppose, in regarding pain as a good, whereas hedonism consists in regarding pleasure as a good. Asceticism, in its extreme form, regards pleasure as an evil and hedonism in its extreme form regards pain as an evil. So you can certainly make the transition from the one to the other by simply changing your attitude. There doesn't seem to be any difficulty here. If you change your attitude, change your philosophy, you change your attitude towards pleasure and pain, towards those particular aspects of your own sensitivity, your own experience.

Buddhadasa: Well! That suggests if you look at the nature of the Spiral Path, it seems to be an ascending order, a movement to greater and greater levels of pleasure.

S.: Indeed.

Buddhadasa: In which case, I would have thought that hedonism not necessarily in its extreme form would be much more of a healthy basis for movement into the ascending order of pleasure, rather than liking pain, because the two don't

S.: I think you are confusing two things: hedonism, as a fixed and settled attitude, almost a philosophy, and hedonic experience. Hedonism cannot be a part of the Spiral Path or the spiritual path, but hedonic experience certainly can be. I have gone into this in this book review. So hedonism, as the suffix *ism* suggests, is a fixed attitude, is a philosophy. The context in which Guenther uses this word in his translation makes that clear, I think. Hedonism, according to him or according to Gampopa as translated by him, is the tendency to or the attitude of as if it were glorifying your pleasurable experiences and making much of them; making, one might say, too much of them; ignoring the non-pleasurable experiences, and grasping the pleasurable experiences that is hedonism. Plus the view that [205] this is a correct attitude. So the fact that hedonism is a wrong attitude does not mean that hedonic experience is to be excluded from the spiritual path, by any means. But you become a hedonist as soon as you start overvaluing the hedonic experience; just as you become an ascetic if you start undervaluing it. But, again as I say in this book review, an element of asceticism is also necessary in the spiritual life, in the sense that you have to detach yourself from the lower degree of hedonic experience if you want to experience a higher degree of hedonic experience. Therefore I say that hedonic experience, and what one might call ascetic experience, are not mutually exclusive. Pavel: It actually has been asked ... what if you say that if you simplify your life, you just stop indulging in certain things and certain activities, and you can be accused of being ascetic, but this is

S.: Oh, yes! But actually, from your own point of view, your hedonic experience not your hedonism, but your hedonic experience may be more intense than that of the hedonist, the professed hedonist. You actually may be enjoying yourself much more. He may say 'What, no semidetached, no TV set, no motor car, no holidays in Spain? How can you possibly be enjoying yourself? You are a real ascetic, you are.' But actually, you, without all those things, may be far happier than he is with them. So who is the hedonist? Who is the ascetic? But people very often think that you must be an ascetic, and you must be painfully depriving yourself of something because they cannot imagine doing without that particular article or that particular indulgence. Some people think that you are a real ascetic if you don't smoke, or if you don't drink etc. etc., no need to go into details. But this is, I think, one of the things that strike reasonably objective people coming into contact with the FWBO initially that people seem unusually happy; whereas they don't seem to have much cause for happiness! At the same time, they don't seem moronic or mongoloid or anything like that; they seem reasonably intelligent, but still they are happy; even though they don't have those very things which give you happiness so it is a bit of a paradox in the eyes of some people. Prasannasiddhi: Didn't you say once, Bhante, that we have to become or you thought it would be better if we became or that we had to become pagans before we could actually develop further in the spiritual life? This was at a conference with Christians.

S.: I think that is probably a rather overworked quotation! No, it wasn't at a conference with Christians, it was at an art college in where was it? Portsmouth.

: Pre-FWBO days?

S.: No, it wasn't pre-FWBO days; not so far as I recollect. I wouldn't have said anything like

that publicly in my pre-FWBO days! But, yes, in the notion of paganism I did include a positive rather than a negative attitude to hedonic experience. Not that one should be a hedonist, or a follower of hedonism, as I explained earlier; that is a quite different matter.

Buddhadasa: I think partly what ...ed the question was that Gampopa seems to emphasize the hedonist; he goes to some lengths to condemn the hedonistic way of life and warn against it; he says nothing about the ascetic.

S.: Well, perhaps that tells us quite a lot about the Tibetans. It is difficult to say. In India, religious people at least seemed much more inclined to asceticism, at least in the Buddha's day.

[206]

Buddhadasa: So we just thought maybe the pleasurable, hedonistic side of the Tibetan way of life, is, to them, a natural springboard into the spiritual life; to say that the spiritual life is better than the one they've got. Not trying to justify hedonism.

S.: Yes, but the questions were about hedonism, so I was insisting, one might say, on a precise use of language. There is, as I said, quite a difference between hedonism and being able to, let us say, appreciate hedonic experience.

Chairman: The second question comes from Barry.

Barry: It seems that, for young men, the practice of celibacy on a long-term basis is often very difficult. However, in the Buddha's time, celibacy was required of all the bhikshus.

S.: It still is.

Barry: Do you think that this was, and is, perhaps an extreme requirement, or do you think that under the right conditions any male Order Member could practise celibacy on a long-term basis?

S.: Let's go through that bit by bit.

Barry: It seems that for young men the practice of celibacy on a long-term basis is often very difficult.

S.: I think there are two not very clear statements there. What exactly is 'a young man'? Are you still young, say, at 40?

Barry: Let's say in your 20s. (Laughter.)

S.: And what about this 'relatively' long? What do you mean by relatively long a month, a week, a year?

Barry: On a long-term basis: let's say, er, let's say a year.

S.: I was going to say that's not very long, but maybe that is pure prejudice on my part! All right, so here comes the question.

Barry: Right. However, in the Buddha's time, celibacy was required of all the bhikshus. Do you think that this was perhaps an extreme requirement, or do you think that under the right conditions any male Order Member could practise celibacy on a long-term basis?

S.: There are quite a few questions involved here, one might say. I think conditions that is to say, external conditions do make a very big difference, and I think one of the features of the modern world, certainly of urban life today, is the amount of sexual stimulation that there is around, in the form of advertisements and films and all sorts of things that you can think of quite easily. It is well-known, of course, that the male human being, especially young let's say the 20-year-old male human being is rather susceptible to such stimula[tion], let us say. So that if one really wants to practise celibacy at that period of one's life, one needs to live and work in a place where such stimulation is as little as possible. That, one might say, is a negative condition. There are other positive conditions which are helpful. I have mentioned these time and again, but no doubt it is not a bad thing to mention them once more. First of all, experience does show that positive friendships, friendships in [207] which quite a lot of positive emotion is involved, do help in taking the pressure, so to speak,

off one's sexual desires. Then, of course, involvement in the arts in music, in poetry, perhaps the visual arts either just as an enjoyer or as a creator, or both. And then perhaps a certain amount of physical activity, even physical exercise. All these things do help, these things constitute or include the positive conditions for the observance of celibacy. But I think it is going to be very difficult for someone of the type you describe who is trying to be celibate just by force, unless he is of an unusually spiritual nature or temperament, without paying attention to these negative and positive conditions, which help the observance of celibacy. So I think one has to take that into account. I am very doubtful whether, in the Buddha's day, the monks and others did find celibacy intrinsically more easy, but I think the stimulations were less in the Buddha's day. And also once someone had Gone Forth he was living off and in the midst of nature, and I think that too can be very helpful, just to live in contact with nature. It is restful, it is soothing, in a way that life in the city is not. I think, from all the various provisions in the Vinaya Pitaka, it is quite clear that a lot of the monks did not have an easy time with celibacy. Perhaps that is rather consoling to us now. You have also suggested that perhaps there was an almost undue emphasis on it in the Buddha's day, but one must not forget that in the Buddha's day there were no such things as contraceptives, so that if you entered into sexual relations with someone of the opposite sex, you were almost certain to have offspring. That would mean a responsibility. So if you wanted to commit yourself to a full-time spiritual life as one who had Gone Forth, you could not afford to have any responsibilities of that sort. So if you wanted to be free from responsibilities, break loose from the family and so on, you had necessarily to be celibate. There is one example I have come across of a non-Buddhist parivrajaka, someone who had Gone Forth, that went forth with his wife who was a female parivrajaka, but they got into terrible difficulties according to the story, due to poverty and all that, when the time of the wife's delivery came around; they had a very hard time. But there is only that one instance I recollect from all the canonical and commentarial literature. So I think that one reason at least for the emphasis on celibacy was to leave the monk free. One also, though, must not forget that there is another aspect to it: the Buddha did on one occasion say, according to the Pali Canon, that if there had been another desire as strong as the sexual desire, no human being would have been able to gain Enlightenment. This requires some pondering. So one needs to take up a very definite attitude towards this aspect of one's life: not just as it were leave it to look after itself. Some time ago, a few weeks ago, we had a discussion about this, and I said in response to a question that one

should not think in terms of celibacy and non-celibacy as though they were black and white. It is not a question of thinking: 'Shall I be celibate or shall I not be celibate?' Those are not the alternatives that really confront one at all. I think that is entirely a wrong way of looking at things. I think one has got to think in terms of a movement towards greater celibacy. Because if you look at celibacy in the strict sense, brahmacharya in the strict sense, it is not only bodily, it is also verbal, it is also mental; so you cannot really be considered fully celibate, to be fully a brahmachari and practising brahmacharya so long as your mind is not free from sexual desires. So even if you are celibate technically, your mind is not necessarily going to be free from such desires. So it is not a question of either being celibate or not being celibate. One might say that no one, probably, is so celibate that he could not be more celibate, and also that no one is so uncelibate that he could not be more uncelibate. Do you see what I mean? It is a question of degree. So I think what has to do is, if one is taking the spiritual life seriously, if one is trying to be ..., there has to be a definite movement in the direction of greater celibacy, of more perfect practice of brahmacharya, from whatever position [208] you happen to occupy at the moment. I don't think it is a question of either black or white, either this or that. I think probably that is the most balanced way of looking at the whole question: first of all, recognizing brahmacharya as an ideal that is to say, true, natural or spontaneous brahmacharya; and recognizing the obligation to work gradually towards that. But just because you have given up physical sex, you are not necessarily celibate in the full sense. Do you see what I mean? And if you haven't given up sex, it doesn't mean that you are completely non-celibate. What is important is the movement towards a definite goal, towards a definite ideal. The whole subject was discussed much along these lines a few weeks or a few months ago, but much more fully. I forget the actual retreat that was on. So I will refer you to that discussion as and when transcribed.

Dhammarati: There was one just passing comment in the seminar transcripts, on the description of hells. You were suggesting hedged about with conditions that concentration on the hells meant [to] some extent the result of sadism brought about by enforced celibacy in the monastic life. Do you think there are risks involved in a sort of wilful imposition of celibacy before [there is] an emotional alignment behind the idea?

S.: I think there probably are. I think, for the vast majority of people in the FWBO, those risks are purely academic; because hardly anybody forces themselves to be celibate. I think the risks, if any, are entirely, or almost entirely, on the other side of the question. So I don't think those risks, if they do exist well, yes, they do exist for some people concern us actually very much. I am afraid the FWBO, from the very beginning, has always tended to veer towards hedonism rather than asceticism. I mean, where are the ascetics? (Laughter.) If there are any around, they are very heavily disguised!

Chairman: The next question comes from Jarmo.

Jarmo: Once one has got a relationship with one's yidam, can the relationship be sexual as well? Especially if one has committed oneself fully to the Dharma and one can't afford to have any relationships, can the relationship with the yidam be sexual?

S.: It obviously can't be fully sexual, because the yidam doesn't exist on the physical plane, so it can only in any case be a question of sexual feeling or sexual desire. I have dealt with this some little time ago; I recently edited an extract on this, so I assume it is coming in a Mitrata some time, if it hasn't already come. But anyway, what I said on that occasion was that,

according to some teachers, all one's feelings, one's emotions, including one's sexual feelings, should or could be put on to one's spiritual ideal. I think I added to that that perhaps they are safer there than anywhere else. Oh yes, I remember perhaps the context now: I think originally a woman Order Member wrote to me to say that she was experiencing sexual feelings in connection with her particular yidam, which happened to be a masculine yidam, and she was wondering whether this was something to be encouraged, discouraged or whatever. So I wrote to her to say that, according to some spiritual teachers, it is not even just not a bad thing but even positively a good thing to allow even one's sexual feelings to flow in that direction, because one is after all trying to put all one's energies, all one's emotions, all one's feelings, on to that ideal; to gather them up, as it were, and place them there. So certainly this is an approach which is sanctioned by tradition.

Pavel: What about developing sexual feelings towards a male yidam? It is more difficult. Is it better?

[209]

S.: You say 'developing'. I don't think it really matters. A yidam is a yidam. I don't think it matters whether the yidam has a masculine form or a feminine form from this point of view. The important thing is that the feelings, the emotions, including the sexual ones, get raised and hopefully eventually sublimated. I think one has to be quite sure that that is what is actually happening: that you are not merely sort of thinking it; that you haven't, in D.H. Lawrence's phrase, merely got sex in the head, which is where, according to Lawrence, it should not be. So it is not just a question of thinking it but of actually experiencing it, at least to a limited degree.

Chairman: The next question now comes from Prasannasiddhi.

Prasannasiddhi: This is from the text, 'The Viciousness of Samsara.' Bhante, do you think that Gampopa's description of the unpleasantness of the period in the womb is exaggerated? Could you say more on the state of consciousness of a being in the womb?

S.: Who remembers being in the womb? Can nobody? Some people do have experiences of remembering being in the womb, and as I mentioned in connection with the question of rebirth, you can be made to regress, it seems, and recollect what it was like to be in the womb. I think it is quite possible that Gampopa is exaggerating. I won't be too sure about it, but I think it is possible; though, again, according to the author of the little book I mentioned the other day, people who have regressed back to their previous birth and their previous death seem to agree that birth the act of birth as distinct from being in the womb is more painful than the act of death, which is rather interesting. Apparently death is a comparatively peaceful, and eventually even a pleasant process, whereas birth is not. So I think if one can accept the evidence derived in this way that that is a quite interesting point that the passage from a body, or passage from the world, let us say, should be a more pleasurable experience than entry into it. Because when babies are born they howl; but apparently that is not because they are necessarily not happy to be here, but so as to get their lungs working. If I am not quite right here, no doubt I shall be corrected from the left! That is why, I believe, they slap babies to make them cry if they don't cry naturally.

Phil: I have heard at fourth or maybe fifth hand that you said on the Women's Convention that you had some memory of being in the womb.

S.: Ha ha. Not quite. When I was very young I must have been two or three, maybe even younger I certainly had dreams which, on looking back, seem to me to represent reminiscences of being in the womb. I can't really get closer to it than that, but I think probably that was the case, and I certainly have recollections of very vivid dreams that probably represented a recollection of birth actually approaching not any actual recollection of the moment of birth, but that moment coming near. And I do recollect it from those dreams as something rather frightening rather than otherwise. But these things are not at all clear now. I am basing myself on memories of dreams I had at that very early age, repeatedly, dozens of times if not hundreds of times, which I cannot interpret in any other way, I think, than that though I could be mistaken.

Prasannasiddhi: Why do you think it is that people do not remember the period in their mothers' wombs?

S.: I think it is to do with the nature of consciousness assuming that you are conscious; because, as I mentioned again the other evening, that little book makes the point that, according to some of the evidence, the consciousness, to use that term, does not necessarily enter the infant in the womb from the very beginning, from the very moment of conception. It can enter later or even, in exceptional [210] cases, after birth. I don't take that as definitely demonstrated one way or the other, but it does seem to be a possibility. There seems to be some evidence, at least. So to remember being in the womb there must have been some kind of consciousness present in the womb associated with the body; but even supposing it is there and associated with the body, it is a relatively unevolved consciousness at least at that time; because we know that the child, the baby, when it is born and for the first few months, even a year or more of life, does not really have a reflexive consciousness. Presumably, therefore, it does not have memory at all. So it would seem that is the reason why, however hard you may try to remember, you can very rarely go back earlier than the age, I think, of two. Because, in a sense, you don't then exist as a person. There is nothing to go back to. Though, of course, that raises the question of the relation between that consciousness then, which is below the level of self-consciousness, and the consciousness in the previous life, which presumably was on that level. Some explain it by saying that the whole process of death and existence in the intermediate state and rebirth is so traumatic that a lot of one's experience gets as it were rubbed out. But no doubt this is one of the things that will have to be investigated on a more empirical basis.

Prasannasiddhi: I don't know if there is much you can say on this. I was just wondering, a person is in the womb just for nine months and in one spot as it were; what sort of state of consciousness would they be in? Would they be in a dhyanic state or a sort of self-conscious state?

S.: According to tradition, it varies, because according to tradition there are some beings who, on account of practices in previous lives, remain completely conscious during the period of gestation. There was even a classification somewhere in the Pali scriptures. Some enter the womb consciously but do not remain conscious in it, nor are they born consciously. Others enter consciously, remain conscious while in the womb, but are not born with consciousness. And others are born with consciousness. There is a sort of classification from Bodhisattvas down to Stream Entrants. So the possibility of continuity of consciousness, in the full sense, in the womb is admitted, but it is also said to be quite rare. Ordinary beings, those who are non-Aryan, do not experience it normally, except as it were by accident, almost.

Prasannasiddhi: So it might be almost a coma-like experience they have?

S.: Well, what is the condition of a newly-born baby? He is almost in a coma, isn't he? He sleeps most of the time. I suppose technically a baby in the womb sleeps; again, further information might be forthcoming from the left.

Tape 20, Side 2 nd I imagine a baby in the womb sleeps?

Dharmadhara: It sleeps and wakes. It moves as well, it kicks and it sleeps.

S.: It doesn't speak? It doesn't cry?

Dharmadhara: No, it doesn't breathe. Well, it doesn't need to breathe, it just swallows water. It doesn't seem to make any noise. It sucks its thumb sometimes.

: In what sense do you mean, Dharmadhara, that it wakes?

Dharmadhara: Well, it's moving. It's kicking quite vigorously, so it's awake, presumably, unless it's kicking in its sleep. And then there are periods when it's completely quiet.

[211]

S.: Is it known whether its eyes are ever open?

Dharmadhara: I think they are, yes. There is a photo of ...

S.: But it wouldn't see very much?

Dharmadhara: There probably wouldn't be very much light at all. Maybe very little...
Medicine doesn't speculate about consciousness in the womb.

Pavel: Recently in discussions about abortion, some people are against it because the embryo can suffer by abortion; so [it seems] consciousness in the womb varies.

S.: I don't think anyone would deny there is sentience in the womb, even if it isn't consciousness in the fully developed sense. Therefore, if there is sentience there is the possibility of suffering. The foetus does presumably suffer if, for instance, it is aborted. Well, it suffers even when it is born, to some extent.

Dhammarati: I am just thinking how different Gampopa's picture is from the traditional sort of psychoanalytic picture of the security of the womb, the reluctance to be born. Do you think there is any psychological point in Gampopa, or is a matter of a sort of ethnic tradition ...?

S.: I think we have to gather further evidence from empirical sources. I think in some ways there is no point in speculating, because I think we are probably in a position now actually to find out the facts, at least more of them than it was possible to find out in Gampopa's time. So I think probably it isn't very useful to speculate. We should just get someone like Dharmadhara, or someone like Pavel, to do some research, look up medical journals and so on, and try to find out whether we have actually more concrete information at our disposal. But it is an interesting point that it is quite possible that the womb might not be such a safe

and comfortable and secure place as, possibly, the psychoanalysts have tended to think. Perhaps their way of thinking in this respect was based almost more on mythology than on physiology or embryology or whatever it was.

Chairman: The next question is from Prakasha on the bardo.

Prakasha: The book *Life After Life* by Raymond Moody describes the after-death experiences of those who have been clinically dead but have later recovered. One of the common testimonies described was that, when entering the bardo, some people were met and welcomed by their friends and relatives. Have you any comments on this?

S: Met by their friends and relatives. Presumably dead ones?

Prakasha: Yes, I assume so. Yes.

S.: It is really difficult to offer any comment, because there doesn't seem to be any way of objectively checking that. Even if all the people who have been clinically dead and then been resuscitated had that sort of experience, it still doesn't prove anything about what objectively happens. You might even, say, see your loved ones coming to meet you, those who had gone before, but even that doesn't mean that they actually are there in the same sort of way that they were present when they were alive on earth. It could be, to use the well-worn term, a projection on your part. So I don't think we can conclude anything of a veridical nature from that sort of testimony, even though it may be unanimous. Again, the author of the little book I mentioned says that people who have regressed under hypnosis to previous deaths say that they often meet someone who [212] guides them. So it is as though a sort of reassuring figure [appears]. This could be interpreted in terms of friends and relations and so on.

Murray: Do you think any credence [can be placed] in the idea that there is guidance in the bardo sort of, I suppose, celestial guidance? It is quite a common idea.

S.: Again, there is no means of as it were verifying it objectively in a scientific manner. But there does seem to be a quite consistent testimony to this effect, across different religious systems. So one can perhaps attach some significance to that. It certainly ties up with certain Buddhist teachings. What you experience may be an entity independent from yourself; it may be a higher aspect of yourself. It is difficult to say. Perhaps these are all matters of interpretation. Perhaps you meet your guardian angel. Another interesting point that, again, the author of this little book makes, or which he cites from the investigations that he has studied, is that people who have regressed under hypnosis to their bardo experiences, let us say, often say that they meet people, not just guides but friends and well-wishers on the other side, and that before they take rebirth there is a sort of discussion of it, so to speak, of what would be a good rebirth, what sort of rebirth would help them, what sort of rebirth would enable them to develop some undeveloped side of their character, or pay off certain old debts, or to sort out certain old relationships. According to quite a number of these testimonies, these matters are all the subject of discussion, as it were, that a certain agreement or consensus is reached, and in accordance with that the rebirth takes place; which again is a quite interesting idea, in a way sounds quite sensible. You consult your spiritual friends. So it isn't that there is some blind, mechanical law operating and dragging you along with it, so to speak.

Murray: ... [establish] the FWBO in the bardo.

S.: Well, if it's well and truly established in the world, it is sure to extend itself into the bardo and beyond. But you can't have it in the bardo without having it here first. So if you look after this world, the bardo will look after itself.

Chairman: The next question is from Tejamitra.

S.: How are we getting on with our questions, by the way?

Chairman: Two questions left: this one and the next one.

Tejamitra: Bhante, note 43 on p.73 mentions 'the Gandharva, the organizing principle in the state between death and reincarnation'. Could you say more about this where the idea originates, why conception can't take place without it, and whether the Gandharva can be said to have a separate existence of its own in any way?

S.: The term Gandharva is used in several different ways. In one sense, a gandharva is a sort of celestial being. I mentioned the Four Great Kings the other evening; one of them again, I forget which has an entourage of gandharvas, they are connected in that sort of way. So they are a mythological being. But also the term is used for a sort of entity present at the time of conception, or which in a sense has to be present at the time of conception; because there are texts in the Pali Canon I cannot remember now which exact stratum of the texts they belong to which maintain, or where the Buddha is represented as maintaining or stating, that for conception to be possible three things must come together: first of all, there must be a conjunction of male and female; two, it must be the [213] mother's [fertile] period; and, three, the presence of the gandharva. Commentators take gandharva here to be a term for the vijñāna, that is to say the vijñāna coming as it were from the previous life. But the whole subject, I think, is an aspect of the rebirth and karma doctrine which needs reinvestigation, reassessment. Because, as again the author of the little book points out, recent investigations suggest that the consciousness if the gandharva is consciousness is not necessary to conception, but that consciousness the soul, as it were can enter the body at a later stage. So where does that leave the gandharva, as it were? So, again, I think we must not speculate or come to conclusions hastily. I think we just have to gather more information, more evidence, and reflect on that. As again I have said, it may be that some of the traditional Buddhist teachings are to be taken metaphorically rather than literally.

Chairman: The last question is Prakasha's question.

Prakasha: There seems to be a correspondence between angels and devas. What are the similarities and the differences between angels and devas? Are angels subject to the law of impermanence as devas are?

S.: One is really comparing two theological concepts from two quite different traditions. But, taking the angel as it exists in Christian tradition, and I believe Islamic tradition too, an angel is a created being, therefore contingent; and, according to Buddhism, what comes into existence eventually goes out of existence. But I believe, to the best of my recollection, that, according to Christian theology, angels continue to be sustained in existence and will be sustained in existence by God for eternity. So though they are by nature, so to speak, mortal,

they are rendered immortal by God. But in any case, they were created, which is not the case with the devas; devas, like other beings, have no perceptible first beginning or origin. I think one can only equate the angel and the deva as, so to speak, psychological data. I don't think one can equate the Christian theological conception or definition of the angel with the deva of Buddhist thought or Buddhist tradition.

Chairman: That is the last question. We have really done. (?)

: Can I ask a question? You are talking about this little book by

S.: Martin Willson.

: I was thinking in terms of the higher criticism of Buddhism. You get information by which you evaluate the texts?

S.: No, higher criticism is something different. Higher criticism relates to documents. Higher criticism relates, in the case of higher criticism in the Christian context, to the Old and New Testaments; so, in the case of Buddhism, it would relate to the Buddhist canonical literature, trying to ascertain what is old and what is younger, what comes first, what comes next, what comes last, and so what degree of reliability attaches to them, on various linguistic, stylistic, archaeological, historical and other grounds. It is a thorough critical sifting of the texts. So that is a quite different thing from though very likely related to an attempt to as it were reassess some Buddhist teachings or traditions in the light of modern knowledge, of, let us say, a scientific nature. For instance, suppose you take the question of the Sumeru system, which is a system, let us say, of symbolical geography in Buddhist texts. Well, it would be for the higher criticism to try to decide whether the Buddha himself actually taught that or believed it; if not, at what period it came to be taught and believed; which scriptures it appeared in first or what period it appeared first. That would all be a matter of the higher criticism. Whether that particular system [214] is actually so, whether it is in accordance with fact, with scientific truth that would be a matter more for modern empirical investigation; assuming that that Sumeru system, teaching or tradition was understood in the literal sense as a matter of geography, and not in some other, possibly symbolic, sense...

: It's on a different topic, Bhante, but we have been talking quite a bit about rebirth, and I was wondering, if it's not too personal a question, have you ever had any inklings about your own previous lives?

S.: It depends what one means by 'inkling'. I must say I have no direct recollection people have asked me this before and I have said this before but I have my suspicions, mainly from my behaviour as a child. I have spoken before of the fact that my grandmother, that is to say my father's mother, had a lot of curios in her house, and some of them were Buddhist, which had been brought back from China by her second husband, who was my father's stepfather; and I used to be quite fascinated by these as a baby so I was told. Whenever I was taken to my grandmother's house, when I entered the hall, even when I was a baby in arms, I would at once want to look at the Buddhist painting that hung on the wall in the hall. Not that my grandmother knew it was Buddhist, or that my father knew it was Buddhist, but I subsequently can identify it as Buddhist. And similarly there were little images; there was an image of Kwan Yin. I can remember this little image quite clearly; it was on the mantelpiece, and it was a Kwan Yin image. It seemed to have a relic inside. And there were other things.

There was a Tibetan bell behind the door I used to ring when I was a bit older. So there were quite a few things of that sort, and I was really fascinated by these things; and, some years later, I very much wanted a Buddha image of my own, and I remember buying one in a shop in Brighton, just after my illness probably the first time we went down there after that. I remember buying some incense at the same time, and I would regularly burn incense in front of this image. This was before I really knew anything about Buddhism. So, from things like that, I sort of think perhaps I had some connection with Buddhism in a previous life. But I certainly had this strong interest in, or attraction towards, these artefacts. But this is all highly deductive, as it were, even speculative; one can't be sure.

Dhammarati: ... I am always a wee bit unsettled reading the Survey, because it seems ... an uncanny achievement for somebody so young to be doing such a

S.: I wasn't all that young.

Dhammarati: No, but

S.: I gave the lectures on which it was based when I was 23 ? No, not 23, I gave them in 1954, so, yes, I was 28, I hadn't reached my 29th birthday; and I wrote the book in the following year. It is very difficult for me to say, but I think I can say that I have never found it difficult to understand Buddhism. I put my mind on a Buddhist teaching, and I understand it, and I have not found, usually, other people able to do that. So I assume that perhaps I have carried over some understanding from a previous life. But I don't know; it is only a hypothesis, only a speculation.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, I believe I have heard from someone, I think in the FWBO, that you had a recollection of once having faced a sword.

S.: Ah, that is a bit different. Yes, very early in life I did have a sort of feeling I can't remember very clearly about it but I did have a feeling that in a previous life I had died painfully. I had a definite, as it were, recollection, [215] certainly a very strong visual image, of being in front of, I think it must have been a firing squad, and seeing the sunlight shining on the barrels of the rifles; and that was my last recollection, my last experience. But whether I had read something that impressed me like that, or whether it was an actual recollection or a very vivid dream, I really can't say. But I tend to think that probably it was some recollection from a previous life; because I can remember that, when I was a very small child, almost still a baby, one might say, I used to get very uneasy seeing any bright knives or instruments or anything of that sort. I can remember that quite clearly. But, again, one doesn't really know. It is all just possibilities. Lama Govinda told me that he did remember, I think, one or two previous lives. He didn't go into detail, but he did mention that.

Steve: Bhante, in Lama Govinda's book *The Way of the White Clouds*, he gave several examples of people who recalled their previous lives, apparently very vividly, very clearly. Can you comment on those, on the clarity with which they were able to recall detail?

S.: I think the clarity, in the sense of vividness, by itself doesn't really mean very much. It doesn't have any evidential value, because a dream can be very vivid. You can have a very clear recollection of that dream. I think, for a case of rebirth to be established, there must be quite independent objective corroboration. For instance, again in this book I mentioned,

someone, say, professes to remember a previous life. Well, supposing he can give information which he could not have acquired in this life, and which perhaps is not even known to anybody at the present time [was not ... at that time?] but was only subsequently unearthed, well, then that is supporting evidence. There are many such instances. For instance, someone may remember being born in a certain town, and remember very distinctly that in front of his house there was a large, let us say, oak tree; but, according to existing records, there was no oak tree in front of that particular house. But then they subsequently dig up further records which show that, yes, at a certain period there was a large oak tree which was cut down in a certain year. Do you see what I mean? There are many instances of that sort, which corroborate the person's testimony in that way. Guirdham mentions someone known to him who had recollections of, I think it was, her life as a Cathar in the thirteenth century and gave certain information about certain quite ordinary manners and customs of the Cathars which were not in accordance with knowledge about the Cathars at that time but which were subsequently found to be correct as a result of subsequent research into the subject. For instance, I believe I am only quoting from memory it used to be thought that the Cathars, the perfecti, wore black, but according to her they wore dark blue. Subsequent research confirmed, against all previous information, that actually, yes, they wore dark blue. There are quite a few things of that sort. After all that, I suppose you should all get around to reading that little book sooner or later. And maybe other little books, large and small.

Chairman: Are there any points, Bhante, you would like to bring up, in connection with chapter and the previous one?

S.: I don't think so; I don't think I have had any particular thoughts or ideas of my own. Possibly because I studied this some years ago with a study group and I think I had quite an extensive say on that occasion. No, I don't think there was anything.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, it is quite interesting that they outline in that book the hell states, the animal states, preta states, human states, [but] there isn't any mention of gods.

[216]

S.: There is mention of them, but they certainly don't go into detail; whereas, if one looks at the whole as it were map of the cosmos, the greater part of it, in a sense, is taken up by the worlds of the gods; so actually perhaps there should have been much more about them.

Prasannasiddhi: There seems to be quite a sort of lack, if it is a compendium of Buddhist

S.: Perhaps, from Gampopa's point of view, the possibilities of falling to hell are greater than those of floating off up into heaven. Perhaps to warn people about hell is more realistic than to warn them about heaven, or against heaven. Nonetheless, perhaps it does create a certain imbalance the fact that hell is emphasized so very much. Chairman: Something I was speaking of with Vessantara, while we were on the Chairmen's meeting, [was that] we asked several questions in a row on the subject of hell, principally. I recollect that you said on that occasion: 'Oh, perhaps that's enough about hell; perhaps that's enough about suffering.' And we asked quite a few more questions. But, at the end of the evening, it seemed, although we ...that subject eventually that we had partly evoked a certain feeling within the study group, quite a heavy feeling. I wondered if you had noticed that yourself, especially

S.: What I did notice, as far as I recollect, is that people kept coming back to the subject of

hell, when I thought it had been disposed of; and I said, 'That's enough about hell,' but they kept coming back to it. Perhaps there was something that they wanted to say about it that they didn't quite manage to get out. This is just speculation, but perhaps they would have liked to express their resentment at having been brought up, perhaps, in some cases, strongly believing in hell and perhaps being upset by this belief, by this teaching, conditions and so forth, etc. etc. It could have been. I think I do have a vague recollection of what you say.

Chairman: We also mentioned the same sort of comments on a previous session that we had on the first half of this chapter. You said two or three times, 'Perhaps that's enough.' It's the same process going on.

S.: Yes, I think it is very difficult to be positively preoccupied with things which are in a sense negative. I think that is quite difficult. So, yes, I think I tend to discourage people from dwelling too much on subjects like hell, devils, demons, black magic, possession; sometimes you can see people would like to dwell more on those things, but I think if one does it tends to create the wrong sort of atmosphere a not very happy, perhaps even a somewhat heavy atmosphere. But if you are talking about devas and angels and archetypes and even dakinis, perhaps a quite different sort of atmosphere is created.

Prasannasiddhi: This is going slightly away from this point, but going back to what you were saying about there being more heaven realms than hells,

S.: In a sense, because you have subdivided hells, but, yes, in a sense there are more heaven realms.

Prasannasiddhi: Does this imply that the natural tendency of a person, say, from the human realm is more likely to be towards positive states of mind than towards ?

S.: Not necessarily, because the fact that there are so many of these higher realms doesn't necessarily tell you how many people there are in them. But, yes, if you draw a sort of map or diagram of all the different realms according to Buddhism, you will find that those that we are more familiar with occupy a very [217] small space, right down at the bottom, and all the rest is occupied by deva realms. So maybe there is food for thought there.

Dharmadhara: Since we seem to have a bit of time, I've got a question about someone mentioned on p.62: Sangharakshita. Have you come across this figure before dGe.'dun.'tsho?

S.: I can't say that I have. P.62; I noticed it, yes.

Dharmadhara: [Is it] canonical, or ...

S.: '...while those in the deserts were seen by ' Of course, there is the famous text in the Pali Canon which has its counterpart in Sanskrit, ... in Tibet, and that is the Pethavathu(?) and the Vimanavathu(?). The Pethavathu is the abodes of ghosts, one might say, and Vimanavathu the heavenly abodes. The framework is I don't know if anyone has read this but the framework of the text is that Moggallana is just sitting quietly down and he just smiles; someone sees him smiling and says 'Why are you smiling?' And then he relates that he has just seen a bag of bones flying overhead, a bag of bones that has been pecked at by all sorts of birds; actually it is a sort of preta and he is suffering in that way because of such-and-such

actions or deeds in the past. And he relates the story. So there is the Petavathu made up of all those sort of stories, and of course there is the Vimanavathu which consists of stories of the other kind, the good deeds that someone performed, as a result of which they were reborn in heaven, floating around in a beautiful vimana, a sort of floating palace. Usually they acquire this floating palace by making offerings to the monks. These two works are usually considered well, they are clearly quite late works, they are among the latest works to be included in the Pali Canon; certainly composed some hundreds of years after the time of the Buddha. So no doubt the stories of this Sangharakshita were of that type, and there perhaps was a text, possibly a canonical text, along the lines of the Petavathu, relating these sort of stories. This is what one infers.

Mike: This might be a bit of a naive question,

S.: It's nice to encounter a bit of naivety occasionally!

Mike: ... question on karma and rebirth. The traditional view of karma and rebirth, presumably, is based on people having attained some degree of realization into the workings of karma as it has been handed down to us, and now we've got somebody who has written this little book which is [asking] perhaps: 'Is that the working of karma as traditionally handed down to us?' I can't quite

S.: Well, first of all we mustn't assume that there is one single completely consistent tradition about karma and rebirth coming down to us in Buddhism. There are a number of different traditions and they don't always agree. For instance, there are some schools of Buddhism that believe in the antarabhava, the bardo; others that don't. It is not that there is a uniform belief. The Theravadins, for instance, don't believe in the antarabhava or bardo; the Sarvastivadins do, and therefore the Tibetan Buddhists do, because they in this respect follow Sarvastivadin traditions. So, in any case, even leaving aside extra modern sources of information, there is still some sorting out of Buddhist traditions to be done. Of course, you can say, if you are a Theravadin take the view that there is no antarabhava, that the Sarvastivadins are wrong, it is only the Theravadin tradition that is correct. The Sarvastivadins and the Tibetans could take the other view. But for us it is not possible, probably, to identify exclusively in that way with this or that branch of Buddhist tradition, and say that one is right and the other is wrong. So we have to do a certain amount of evaluation. Do we believe, in this [218] case, in the bardo or not? So that means we have to look around, possibly, for evidence of that particular teaching or belief. We can't decide on the basis of what the Buddha said, because tradition differs as to what the Buddha did actually say on this particular point. Here the higher criticism also comes in, because you can scrutinize the documents: are those documents where the Buddha seems to teach the belief in a bardo older than those in which he does not teach it? etc. etc. But of course it is probably not as simple as that; it is a question of the interpretation of the documents, interpretation of the terms. That involves you in a study of the language. There can be dispute even about the meaning of words at that time, and so on.

: Is it traditionally only once you have attained Buddhahood that you can see the workings of karma?

S.: Well, see fully. But one can certainly see to some extent before that again, according to tradition. The Buddha did say, and this seems to be an authentic utterance, that karma and its workings is one of those topics on which one should not dwell too much. He said if you dwell

on the topic of karma and its workings too much it can even have an unpleasant effect on you mentally. But, obviously, we have to dwell on it to some extent, because it is an integral part of Buddhist teaching. So perhaps one is to dwell on the general principle, and try to understand that, rather than trying to unravel specific workings of karma in all cases.

Chairman: Was your question answered, Mike?

Mike: Yes, I think it was.

S.: Also, if we are Buddhist in a broader sense, we can't ignore additional evidence that comes to light. We can't dismiss it just because it isn't included in Buddhist tradition or Buddhist scriptures. We have to take note of it if it does seem to be properly grounded; otherwise we become fundamentalist Buddhists, and probably a fundamentalist Buddhist is a contradiction in terms. But that means, of course, a lot of extra intellectual hard work. Not everybody may feel that they want to do that, or may even feel equal to it. But, as far as the FWBO is concerned, there really have to be some people within it, some Order Members, who are prepared to go into these things, study these things, investigate these things, and possibly place the results of their researches in front of the Order or the Movement or the general public as a whole. After all, not everybody can investigate everything.

Dhammarati: I remember you saying the other evening that

ape 21, Side 1 ... on what seems to be quite essential idea, does that not in a way give you cause for concern that it's an authority on other quite practical matters?

S.: Not really, because there seems to be no difference of opinion on the general principle of karma and rebirth. No Buddhist school, no Buddhist teacher, has ever doubted that there is such a thing as karma and rebirth. But it is understandable that, in the course of hundreds and even thousands of years, certain versions of the teaching of karma and rebirth, or certain illustrations of it, should be of a sort of popular character which are not to be taken too seriously and which do perhaps represent an exaggeration or even a distortion of that teaching or of some aspects of it as when, for instance, hell, let's say, is over-insisted upon. The fact that some Buddhists, let's say, overemphasise hell does not invalidate the basic principle of karma and rebirth; does not even invalidate the teaching about [219] hell, in principle. It is simply that there has been an overemphasis on it. But, to begin with, no doubt, there is a lot that we have to take on trust, as it were; not just believe blindly, but take on trust and try as far as we can to confirm or otherwise within our own experience.

Danavira: Bhante, I was just wondering about something about rebirth. I was wondering if there was ever any kind of strong tradition of rebirth in the West, and if there was how it managed to disappear say, in the face of natural human experience.

S.: Well, yes, there was and in some ways always has been a strong tradition of rebirth in the West, at least in an underground sense. But, in a more public sense, of course, it was stamped out by orthodox Christianity. Again, there are books on the subject. This particular author does give references to some of them, and I have several of them at Padmaloka. There are anthologies of texts and quotations from Western writers throughout history to show that there were some people, often quite important and intelligent people, at all times, practically, who believed in rebirth. That particular teaching was not even anathematised in Christianity

itself until, as far as I recollect, the fifth century. The great teacher Origen believed in rebirth. According to some authorities, there were traces of it in the Gospels, even in the teaching of Christ himself. Somebody was brought to him who was born blind; so Christ asks 1: 'Wherefore was he born blind? As a result of the sin of his parents, or as the result of his own sin?' You see, what are the implications of that? You can be born blind as the result of your own sin only if a previous life is postulated; but that passage is there in the New Testament. In this century there have been Christians, even quite well-known Christians, who have maintained that Christ did teach rebirth or did believe in it. There was the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead; as a Christian, he was a firm believer in rebirth and wrote books about it. I don't know if any of you remember Leslie Weatherhead; I think he was wasn't he the vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields for a while? He was a quite well-known Christian in the '20s or '30s.

Dhammarati: This is backtracking. I have a few ideas coming together. We were talking about how certain teachings are overemphasised ... I was thinking what a lucky thing it is that we have got a teacher who can discriminate, and that got me thinking about things that you had said about the Theravada tradition that do not seem have that kind of authority any more, and things that you had said about a number of the Tibetan teachers... and that got me wondering if ... actually set up the conditions that bring about ... and a degree of spiritual insight. Do you actually see the results that you would expect in the traditions that have been practising them? If you've got so many people with so many traditions practising, are the results that you would expect there?

S.: One thing that one has to say is that the Buddhist tradition itself foresees its own demise: there are many warnings and even, in a way, prophecies in Buddhist scriptures about the decline of the Dharma. One might even say it is a fundamental teaching of Buddhism that, periodically, the Dharma does disappear and has to be rediscovered by someone who becomes what we call a Buddha in the full sense. So, that being the case, it is not surprising that, yes, the Dharma, as embodied in a particular tradition or in institutions, does in the course of time decline. It is, in a way, what one would expect, on account of what I have called the gravitational pull. So Buddhism has now been extant, the present disposition, for 2500 years; so it is difficult to know what to say in reply to that sort of question. In some ways, one is disappointed, say, that Buddhists who have such an excellent teaching don't practise it better. On the other hand, perhaps one is surprised that they practise it to the extent that they do. It is difficult to know which reaction to have, in a way. Sometimes I have felt very disappointed in the Buddhists that I have actually met in the East; but, on the other hand, [220] organized Buddhism hasn't been responsible for the sort of things that organized Christianity has been responsible for, or organized Islam has been responsible for, or Hinduism has been responsible for. It seems never to have really fallen below a certain level. You can say that monks became lazy; you can say that monks, in a ??? The disciples ask (John ix, 2). 2Minister of (Methodist) City Temple for many years. way, became corrupt. But they never became power-mad in the way that so many representatives of the Christian church seem to have become. There were very keen debates about doctrinal differences, but there were never fierce persecutions; they never burned one another at the stake. So even that is a very great thing. One might say that, broadly speaking, despite corruption and degeneration, Buddhism on the whole has never fallen, never sunk, to the depths that Christianity has done in the West; so at least one can be thankful for that.

Dhammarati: I am trying to understand how, in terms of that degeneration, if the traditions have been degenerating, if your contact with those traditions has been contact with a

degenerate tradition, can we expect to do more than just not burn each other at the stake? How come this has ... such a vigorous movement?

S.: I think one has to just, again, look at one's own experience. Because one has heard, no doubt, so many lectures, read so many books, listened to so many tapes, [but] one might still find it difficult to get up early in the morning and meditate; and one might still have one's little attachments here and there. So one might say, how is this? You might ask yourself this question: how is it? Everything has been made so clear, there is a good organization set up, and there are men's communities to live in, and centres to go along to, retreats that you can go on; how is it that I don't make better use of the opportunities that I have? Because one might say that nobody, perhaps hardly anybody, makes full use of the opportunities and facilities that they do have. Why don't they? That's the answer to your question. I put it down to what I call the gravitational pull, which is at work all the time, until you pass the point of no return. Why is it that, say, people in the FWBO don't meditate, say, two hours a day instead of one? Why is it they don't go away on solitary retreat for two months of the year instead of one month? Why is it that they find it necessary to go and see third-rate films or go to parties, or even get a little bit drunk occasionally, even smoke? Why is it they find these things necessary? Why do they still indulge in these things when they have heard, as I said, so many lectures and read so many books about the Dharma and, yes, have actually committed themselves to those things? Well, you might say it's the gravitational pull. In Christian terms, it's the old Adam, [not] to speak of Eve, [not] to speak of the apple, [not] to speak of the serpent! They are all around. Or it's Mara, constantly blinding you, constantly leading you astray. So the answer to these historical questions is actually to be found in your own experience. Human nature seems to be the same at all times and in all places.

Dhammarati: ... are you ambitious for the FWBO, or are you ?

S.: Well, we've come quite a long way in 16, 17 years. I see no reason why we shouldn't go further. But it does depend upon the individual. No one can make anybody else grow or develop. You know the little rhyme that I sometimes quote it's a version of a well-known proverb:

Induce the equine quadruped

to element aquatic;

Exgurgitation [ingurgitation?], it is said,

must still be automatic.

In other words, you can lead a horse to the water (laughter), but you can't make him drink. You haven't heard that one?

[221]

: Say it again.

S.: Well, it's on tape, you should remember the first time. I forget where I read or heard this, years ago as a boy, I think. Quite a neat little rhyme. Spiritual inertia, or just inertia, one might say, is quite a terrible thing, because Sometimes people feel very uninspired; even

though all the means, all the sources of inspiration, are all around them. So that, writ large, is the reason for the decline of Buddhism, to the extent that it was dependent on internal rather than external factors. Perhaps that is a good place to stop.

Voices: Thank you, Bhante.

[222]

Tape 22, Side 1

Chairman: Today we finished our third and final day of study on the chapter 'Karma and its Result', so we have in all 21 questions. They fall into two groups, so we might manage to get through one group tonight, then leave over a group of eight questions, perhaps, for tomorrow. The first question is Prasannasiddhi's question on the niyamas.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, in The Three Jewels you outline the five niyamas. Could you say more about the manoniyama and the way in which it differs from karmaniyama

S.: Manoniyama, broadly speaking, can be said to refer to mental operations of a non-karmic nature. For instance, if you open your eyes and you simply see something, that is a mental operation; but in itself it has no karmic significance. So the manoniyama covers all such mental operations mental operations which stop short of, or don't amount to, karma in the sense of volition. You could say that it covers everything to do with the process of perception.

Prasannasiddhi: What about, say, reactions like if you stood on a pin or something like that would that just be a manoniyama?

S.: Well, there are automatic reactions and there are reactions in the sense of actual volitions. Sometimes it is difficult to tell where one ends and the other begins. But, for instance, supposing someone suddenly pokes something in your eye, you at once blink; that blink is entirely involuntary, it has no karmic significance. But if then you proceed to become angry with the person who pokes something in your eye, then that anger is a volition and you will then be creating as it were fresh karma. But the initial blink, one might say, would belong to manoniyama, if it belongs anywhere, so to speak. The same with the knee-jerk; if the doctor taps you somewhere and your knee jerks, it is a purely automatic reflex action that has no significance. If you happen accidentally to kick someone, even injure them, as a result of that knee-jerk, without intending to do so, that action will have had no ethical significance. But supposing the doctor taps your knee and there is a knee jerk, and he keeps on doing it and you become angry with him and perhaps then you actually kick him well, then that comes under the heading of karmaniyama. That is volition, that is cetana.

Lalitaratna: I just ask the obvious: so volitions can be quite unconscious, to begin with?

S.: It is really not correct to use the word volition for these reflex actions. I think that only confuses the issue.

Lalitaratna: The rising anger if somebody pokes you in the eye would that be if it was unconsciously

S.: The anger is a negative mental state, an unskilful mental state. You are unconscious of it,

or relatively unconscious of it, to begin with. But inasmuch as your potential for anger is not aroused, it is as it were quiescent and you don't think about it. You might even think you are a quite good-tempered person, but something happens and that potential for anger is gradually actualized, or perhaps even suddenly actualized.

Prasannasiddhi: In our study group we were also talking about habitual activity that didn't seem to be of very great significance, like cleaning your teeth when [223] you get up in the morning you know, every morning you get up and clean your teeth. There seemed to be a whole category of things that

S.: Well, in the Pali Abhidhamma at least, actions are classified as skilful, unskilful and neutral. The neutral are those, presumably, of that nature which you perform, whether habitually or not, but without their being particularly skilful or particularly unskilful, neither positive nor negative, as it were; actions to which very little feeling, if any, attaches.

Prasannasiddhi: And they would be part of karma, karmaniyama?

S.: No, they wouldn't be part of karmaniyama. You could even regard them as virtually reflex actions. You wouldn't be accumulating tooth-cleaning karma, unless it was associated with some other definite intention; for instance, if you definitely and consciously cleaned your teeth with the intention of beautifying yourself; this would represent a mental attitude, this would represent an actual volition, and it would have karmic consequences. But if you simply got into the habit of cleaning your teeth and don't attach any particular importance to it, it could no doubt be classified as a virtually neutral, that is to say karmically insignificant, action. I am not sure whether the Abhidhamma actually discusses instances of that sort, but this is what I imagine the position would be.

Danavira: Bhante, you just mentioned anger. I hope it isn't too much of a diversion, but I wonder if you would clear something up for me? I have heard some people say that they think anger is not an unskilful mental state. I think I have also heard somebody say they think that anger is a neutral mental state. Can you tell you me if you think anger is could you clarify that for me?

S.: This was discussed some time ago, and I said I thought it was necessary to distinguish between anger and hatred. Hatred is definitely unskilful. Hatred is the mental attitude of wishing to cause harm and suffering to another living being. Anger is not necessarily that; anger I tend to regard as the energy which accumulates in the face of obstacles and which builds up to such an extent that there is a tendency to break through the obstacle. It may or it may not be associated with hatred. This is what I call anger. You can become angry and try to break through certain obstacles or hindrances as a result of that anger, but without certainly without consciously or deliberately intending harm to any other living being. I would tend to regard such anger as being neutral in itself. Of course, it may be that that anger, that frustration, in a sense, is tied up with or is the result of a strong desire or craving. If that desire or craving is unskilful, even the anger will be unskilful. But sometimes you can get frustrated, or feel frustrated, when you encounter obstacles as you are trying to do something quite skilful, quite noble, quite worthy. So anger that arises in that way, in the sense I have defined, I would say is not necessarily unskilful; but it can, of course, very easily pass over into hatred, at least in a mild form, and there you have to be very careful; because if you are conscious that the obstacle is being created by some person, in the process of trying to burst

through you may well develop an attitude of ill will towards the person who is creating the obstacle and preventing you doing what you want to do. Nonetheless, I think there is a sense in which you can say that anger, as distinguished from hatred, is not necessarily, not invariably, unskilful. But I think in practice you have to be very cautious about that. Perhaps it is very rarely that you do in fact find anger without at least a tendency to hatred.

Gerry: Bhante, from what you say, could you use as a rule of thumb if that anger involves some other person, there is another person involved in the situation, then it is necessarily unskilful?

[224]

S.: I wouldn't say it is necessarily unskilful, or that the anger will necessarily develop into hatred, but you should certainly be very, very careful. It may be that the obstacle is something inanimate, so you could as it were develop anger and you could use that anger to sort of break through the obstruction which is formed by that inanimate thing; but sometimes you can feel angry even with an inanimate thing, even feel hatred towards the inanimate thing; and that can be unskilful. You are almost treating the inanimate thing as though it were animate, as though it were a person. But I think there is much less likelihood of feeling actual hatred as a result of the anger if the obstruction is provided by an inanimate object.

Gerry: I was also thinking of anger in relation to meditation, when you are involved in meditation practice. It can be the anger that is breaking through obstructions. Is that ?

S.: Well, does it actually happen? Here again, you have to ask yourselves the question. You have all tried to break through the five hindrances; have you ever found that it helps you to become angry either with yourself or with those five hindrances? Have you ever found that it helps you actually to break through in that way have you found that? Maybe it is a question you can ask yourselves. Does it help? Has anyone actually found it? Or doesn't it work like that?

: It has never helped me.

Prasannasiddhi: ... got that sort of experience. : Tenderness more than temper. (?)

S.: Yes, perhaps it can help with sloth and torpor; you can get angry with yourself and reproach yourself for being so lazy and dull and slack, and all the rest of it. Perhaps it works there, with that particular hindrance. But again, you must look at your own experience; because this is the sort of question everybody should be able to answer from his own experience. Does anger help in removing or in overcoming any of the five hindrances?

Chairman: The next question is from Barry.

Barry: In our study group, people were giving examples of how their states of mind seem to affect what happens to them. For instance, one person said that when he is in a good state of mind, his No.8 bus always arrives very soon after he starts waiting for it; and someone else said that when he really wants to get somewhere, he regularly goes through one green traffic light after another. However, in these examples there seems to be no identifiable cause and effect process. Have you got any explanation for this sort of phenomenon?

S.: Well, first of all you have to be quite clear that the phenomenon does take place; and I don't know very much about statistics, but I imagine you would have to gather, to classify and analyse quite a large number of examples before you could come to any conclusion. That is one point. The other point is, as I have mentioned before, there are some people who seem as if they were lucky; things go right for them. There are other people who seem unlucky; things always go wrong for them. One can actually observe that, in the case of individual people. That, no doubt, has something to do with karma, one might say, but I don't think one can go beyond these two points. One could even say that, in the case of the person who maintains that, when he is in a positive mood, the bus arrives quickly, well, if you are in a positive mood you are not impatient; you are not just waiting on [225] tenterhooks. So it seems that the bus comes along after a not very long time; well, what is 'long', anyway? That is a quite relative term. Does it mean not longer than the statutory time, the statutory interval after which the bus is supposed to come? Or that it doesn't seem long? Or whatever. If you are in a not very positive mental state, it always seems that things are going wrong, even perhaps when objectively they are not. So there are all sorts of considerations which one has to include here.

Barry: We did discuss that: that your state of mind makes things seem better or worse. And it seems that, over and above that, you seem to get these sort of

S.: In that case, the point I made with regard to statistics still holds good. Just a few examples from one's personal experience, or the personal experience of a few friends, are not really enough to establish a definite conclusion. Probably one would have to collect and classify and analyse some thousands of instances, at least, and establish very definite criteria.

Dhammarati: The context of the discussion was around the whole subject of karma. The real question seemed to be how there could be some kind of causal relationship between your state of mind and events that seemed to happen objectively. But you [referred to] the results and objective world as it were, and that couple of instances came to me. I remembered in the seminar transcript of the ... you have talked about, I don't know the exact ..., but the sense of it was that ... if you made a serious effort to grow, you really are stretching yourself and exerting yourself, then, as I understood your comments, it seemed that somehow objective circumstances kind of cooperated.

S.: Yes. An example that is sometimes given, which I think I have given sometimes myself, is that when, say, a ball falls, there is always a place for it to fall on to; so you might say how does it come about that, when a ball falls, there is always a place for it to fall on to? What a strange thing! But if you analyse it, it is really not so strange, if you bring into it the law of gravitation. You could say that the fact of the ball falling, and the fact of there being somewhere for it to fall on to, are different aspects or different facets of really the same thing, the same phenomenon or the same set of conditions. So in the same way, taking a broader view, everything in the universe is interconnected. So, because everything is interconnected, it is possible for something in the objective world to happen at the very same time as you are there for it to happen to; the whole situation having come about, from your point of view, as a result of your karma. And your karma is not something that exists in isolation from the rest of the universe; your karma is something as it were that the rest of the universe takes into consideration. So one has to see it more in those terms. It means envisaging a vast and very, very complicated network of interconnections, karmic and otherwise.

Dhammarati: It seemed to be a ...tution. If you took the empirical subject as your starting point, the simple relationship, say, going round about ..., ...that sort of ...

S.: This is overlooking the fundamental interrelatedness of everything in the universe. So that, as somebody again has said, if you sneeze, the effects of that are felt by the remotest star!

Gerry: Bhante, I remember very vaguely a quote from Nietzsche in this respect, which basically says that if you are committed things will go all right for you. Is that correct?

S.: I don't think that that's necessarily true. Well, whoever said it, I am not sure that it is necessarily true, because you may be committed now, genuinely [226] committed; but what about the past? Even though you are committed now, you still have to experience the results of actions which you have committed in the past, which may have been very uncommitted or even anti-committed actions, so to speak. Therefore, it has also been said that the fact that you have in the meantime repented does not mean that you will not have to suffer the consequences of your sins! So you can be very committed here and now, but if you have not also been committed in the past, you may still, here and now in the present, despite your present commitment, experience all sorts of difficulties, hindrances, trials and so on. No doubt your present commitment will go to counteract them to some extent, but it is very unlikely that it will be able to cancel them out altogether. So the fact that you are a good person leading a good life, doing everything that you should do, doesn't necessarily mean that circumstances are going to give you an easy time at all I'm afraid!

Pavel: You just said that, Bhante; I just wanted to make a comment that from subjectivity of other people if you want something then it may happen that everything goes wrong. For example, you can be on the way to Tuscany, struck by customs officers and have to pay a lot of money (?), but if you are able to ... overcome all these difficulties then circumstances not always that objective circumstances help you.(?) They sometimes really are in your way.

S.: Yes. Yes, the fact that you are trying to do something good doesn't necessarily mean that your immediate circumstances are going to cooperate with you.

Murray: Is there any truth, Bhante, in the notion that by the practice of the spiritual life, by practising the Dharma, it can accelerate your negative karmas from the past, as it were, can accelerate the rate at which you expiate your negative karmas or work through those karmas?

S.: It is sometimes said I don't really know with what truth that, if you do start practising the spiritual life very intensively, everything will start catching up with you quite quickly, both the results of good actions you have performed in the past and the results of bad actions you have performed in the past. It doesn't seem quite clear why that should be, but this is something that is sometimes said, and for which perhaps there is a certain amount of evidence. But clearly it is very difficult to generalize. Perhaps it is symbolized by the figure of the Buddha seated under the Bodhi Tree: as soon as he started approaching Enlightenment, Mara started taking a very definite interest in him. So perhaps the belief derives from that paradigm, as it were.

Vessantara: Some Hindu gurus claim that they can actually take on the karma of their disciples. Do they actually have a different view of karma from the Buddhist one? Could there be anything in this?

S.: Hindus generally have a very vague idea about karma at all; they don't seem to have a philosophy of karma in the way that Buddhists do, and in the way that Jains in fact do. There is nothing like a detailed discussion of karma in Hindu literature at all, to the best of my recollection; certainly no discussion that is at all well known. In the Vedanta, in the Advaita Vedanta, there is a distinction between certain basic kinds of karma, but in a very rudimentary way; nothing more than that. So I think that very often, perhaps, the Hindu gurus don't exactly know, don't exactly realize, what they are saying. In this particular chapter of the Jewel Ornament, Gampopa makes it clear, doesn't he, towards the end, that you are the inheritor of your own karma, and that nobody else is the inheritor? This would suggest that the consequences of karma cannot be transferred from one person to another. Of course, from a Buddhist point of view, you might say, 'What about this whole [227] question of transference of merit? Is that to be taken literally or metaphorically?' There is that particular question, certainly on the level of popular Hinayana [?Mahayana] and perhaps even philosophical Mahayana. But perhaps it is a pointer simply to the fact that, inasmuch as there is no permanent, unchanging, ultimately real self, one cannot really regard anything, including merit, as belonging to that self; and the idea of transferring merit is perhaps intended to encourage non-attachment to merit as actually, literally, yours; not that it literally can be transferred from one person to another. In any case, there is no person in the ultimate sense; there is not even any merit in the ultimate sense, as the Mahayana sutras also make clear. So perhaps this talk or this teaching of transference of merit is a skilful means to discourage attachment on a subtle level.

Chairman: ..., Lalitaratna had a

Lalitaratna: No, it's been answered.

Chairman: Dhammarati has a question on maturation and the general result.

Dhammarati: ... I don't really properly understand the distinction between if you look at the examples

S.: On?

Dhammarati: On p.75 ... If you look at the examples that Gampopa gives of the maturation of the event, I think it is, and the general result of the karma, the maturation usually refers to the loka that you are born in, ... hell. The general result also seems to refer, in a way, to the region that you are born in; sometimes it's hell and some...

S.: Yes, I think the general result refers not so much to the world or the realm that you are born in but to the specific conditions that you encounter within that particular realm, which may be relatively good or relatively bad, as the case may be. For instance, to give another example, as a result of the maturation of the act you may be born a human being; but the natural outflow of the existing condition may be [that] you are born in a border area. Or you may be born in the middle country where the Buddha's teaching is known. Within a world, or within a realm, conditions may vary. I think that the general result refers to that.

Dhammarati: So ... other realm, if you are born in a hell,... a cold, wet hell

S.: Presumably, yes. At some points going through this chapter I found the discussion, and

sometimes Guenther's terminology, especially when he didn't give the Sanskrit equivalents, not very clear. But perhaps that doesn't matter. Perhaps I should also mention that this particular discussion of karma and rebirth seems to be based ultimately on Sarvastivadin tradition, which differs to some extent from the corresponding Theravada tradition, on which I tended to base my lecture on karma. There is no difference of principle, but there are certainly some differences in the classifications of karma. It doesn't mean the basic distinction or division is [between] the skilful and the unskilful; the skilful being defined as those karmas free from greed, hatred and delusion, and the unskilful ones those which are not free. That is the basic distinction. But there are several principles of classification which are found in the Theravada Abhidhamma which are not mentioned, or not discussed, here. In some ways the Theravada discussion is a fuller one.

Chairman: The next question comes from Prakasha on collective karma.

[228]

Prakasha: In the text it says that karma 'ripens into the psychosomatic constituents of him who commits the deed, but nowhere else.' If this is the case, can one really talk about collective karma or group karma?

S.: To the best of my knowledge, there is no expression in Pali or Sanskrit corresponding to group or collective karma, but nonetheless it does seem that the idea is there; the idea basically being that the karmas of beings to some extent coincide, therefore that the worlds into which they are born to some extent coincide, or they are born, in a manner of speaking, into the same world. In some of the Mahayana sutras in particular, it says very clearly that worlds come into existence as a result of the karma of sentient beings. So there is not a collective karma, one might say perhaps this is the real crux of the matter not a collective karma apart from the sum total of all the individual karmas. I think that, perhaps, is the real point. There is not some sort of mystical entity, some occult entity, which you could label collective karma, existing apart from all the different individual karmas of the sentient beings concerned.

Vessantara: Bhante, would the karmas which caused you to be born in the same realm as someone necessarily be of the same nature? I am thinking of some of the people that you inhabit the same physical space as; so if you ... that space, or if you take the case of Devadatta, he seems to be reborn over and over again. The kinds of karma which they are producing are ...

S.: One must bear in mind the teaching of the five niyamas, and according to the Pali Abhidhamma at least, everything that happens to you is not the direct consequence of your personal past karmas. Well, if it isn't due to that, clearly a lot of the things which happen to you are not the result of karma; and many of them happen to you just because you are bound up with other people. So it is as though, in order to experience the results of your own karma, you have to as it were be born into worlds in which, as a result of the total deal as it were, you have to experience things which actually are not the result of your karma. That seems to be the situation. Because the teaching of the five niyamas does make it clear that not everything you experience is the result of your karma. For instance, the fact that you have looking at it from another point of view a human physical body is the result of your own past karma; but inasmuch as you have that human physical body as the result of your own past karma, you are vulnerable to, susceptible to, experiences which are not the result of your own past karma.

You can't escape from this sort of situation unless you exist in a purely solipsistic world, which is not the case. In order to experience nothing but the results of your own karma, you would have to be shut up, as it were, in a world entirely of your own, in which you had no contact with other human beings or any other beings as it were in their own right, and in which everything that happened to you was a direct consequence of your own karma. You couldn't have any dealings with any other being; because if their karmas, and therefore their karmavipakas, totally coincided with yours, they would be you; there would be no difference between you and them. But, to the extent that you are different from another human being, in coming into contact with them, you necessarily have to experience things which are not the result of your own karma. As I said, it is part of the total deal, so to speak.

Dharmadhara: Would this be part of the Theravadin tradition and also the Sarvastivadin?

S.: To the best of my knowledge, the teaching of the five niyamas is not found in the Sarvastivadin tradition to the best of my knowledge, it is a Theravadin tradition. But I won't be totally sure of this; you could find those five terms tucked away somewhere in a Sarvastivadin text but not made very much use of. That is possible. But I haven't ever come across them in connection with the Sarvastivadin tradition. Even in the Theravada, they are an Abhidhamma teaching, to [229] the best of my knowledge; that list of five niyamas as such is not found in the suttas. It is a very useful list, notwithstanding. But even in the suttas, of course, the Buddha does make it clear that not everything that happens to you is the result of your personal individual karma. In some ways, it is the question which was raised in the Book of Job to make a great big jump: why should the good man suffer? And you remember Job's friends, his comforters, come and say: 'You must have done something bad, otherwise why should God have punished you in this way?' And he maintains his innocence: 'I have not done anything bad' of course, he didn't believe in previous existences 'I have not done anything wrong. I am innocent.' But his friends say: 'It is not possible for an innocent man to suffer. God wouldn't allow it. You must have done wrong.' But he maintains his innocence, not only in front of his friends, but in front of God. So it is in a way the same ethical problem. So, yes, the innocent person that is to say, the person who is at present, at least, innocent can suffer; not only as a result of his own past karmas, but as the result of being in that particular situation that he is, and in contact with the particular people that he is. Very often, Hindus and Buddhists, too, on the popular level believe that everything that happens to you is the result of your karma, directly; but this is not, in fact, the Buddha's teaching. Whatever you do, all your volitions, have an effect, have a result, which you must experience; but from that it does not logically follow that everything that you experience, whether pleasurable or painful, is the result of your own previous action, your own karma, your own volition. All A is followed by B, but all B is not necessarily preceded by A to put it in strict logical form.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, do you have any idea what percentage would be due to you ?
(Laughter.)

S.: Oh, I don't think the computer exists which could calculate that. Sometimes one may have a sort of hunch from one's own experience, but I don't think it can amount to anything more than that. There are certain things that happen to you, you can be pretty certain you haven't done anything in this life to deserve them; but you can't be sure about your previous lives. Or at least you can be sure there are some things that happen to you, though you can't identify them, which are not the result of previous karmas. I mean, it's a fine sunny day: is that the result of your previous good karma or not? You don't know. But, as I have sometimes said, if

something quite unlikely and extraordinary happens to you in spite of all your precautions, and happens to you again and again, you are quite justified in concluding that that is probably due to your own past karma.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, does the Bodhisattva who goes into the different realms have to experience the karma of the beings in those realms, or is he immune to them?

S.: From statements in the Mahayana sutras, it would appear that the Bodhisattva does actually suffer in, so to speak, descending into the hells; but that he accepts that suffering quite willingly inasmuch as it enables him to approach the beings in that realm and help them. Whether we are to take that literally or not, I find it difficult to say. Perhaps one can take it literally to a certain extent; because, supposing you go and work, say, as an Order Member, in some rather difficult and unpleasant part of the world, you will experience the difficulty and the unpleasantness, but nonetheless you will accept it, even accept it happily, because you are doing some good, you are bringing the Dharma to certain people.

Lalitaratna: Some people seem, according to the text, to live as if it is a completely different order for them. I was thinking of Chandrakirti and the Door of Liberation. To prove a point to a pupil, he just puts his hand through a stone pillar. Is that something else altogether? (Laughter.)

[230]

S.: Presumably it is, but I don't quite see the connection. The same thing is reported of Milarepa. It is supposed to be a characteristic of someone who has realized the truth of sunyata that they have realized that their body is sunyata, that a rock is sunyata, a tree is sunyata, another person is sunyata. So inasmuch as they realize that all things are sunyata, and that one thing does not differ from another, well, one thing offers no obstruction to another; they can put their hand through a rock. Again, whether one is to take this literally is difficult to say. One does know, of course, that one material thing, i.e. a hand, and another material thing, i.e. a rock, are made up of molecules and atoms, are made up of all sorts of things, and that perhaps it would be possible, inasmuch as these things occupy a very small area in comparison to the total volume represented by the ..., it could perhaps be possible to so arrange, by yogic power, the molecules making up one's hand that they didn't collide with the molecules making up the rock. One could perhaps look at it in that way; I don't know whether it is technically possible. But perhaps we should regard these sort of stories as no more than illustrating, in this rather vivid way, the fact of noble realization of sunyata.

Tape 22, Side 2

Gerry: Bhante, if, as you say, things that happen to you are not necessarily karma, I was just wondering what rhyme or reason is that? Is there any underlying pattern to existence, or could you just be swept away by the other niyamas?

S.: I think it depends, in a sense, on the strength of your individuality. If your individuality is sufficiently strong, it won't be swept away, so to speak, by the other niyamas. But if it isn't strong, you will simply subside, so to speak, into being a group member, and you will be at the mercy, virtually entirely, of all sorts of objective factors, all sorts of circumstances. You will put up, as it were, no resistance to them. I think it is one of the characteristics of the individual that he does not succumb to external circumstances. You could even say the

individual is one in whom karmaniyama dominated the other niyamas karma being here understood as skilful karma. Or one in whose life the karmaniyama dominates the other niyamas.

Phil: Is that saying, then, that on a simple level an individual is, say, less likely to be caught in a plane crash or run down by a bus?

S.: No, I wouldn't say that. The fact that the karmaniyama is dominant does not necessarily mean that you are more likely to survive; but one has to think in longer terms, think in terms of the whole process of rebirth in successive lives. Because, even supposing a person who is more of an individual is, say, caught in a plane crash well, his reaction to that will be more that of an individual; the karmas he generates at that moment will still be positive karmas, and will continue to dominate the other niyamas, even though his present physical body may have disintegrated. But he, so to speak his stream of consciousness will, one might say, sail triumphantly over that.

Phil: So what, quite, do you mean by being swept away by the other niyamas?

S.: Well, that was the expression of someone who put the question. Perhaps we should go back to them and ask them what they meant by 'being swept away by the other niyamas'. Who was it?

Gerry: I was thinking a wider question was: what actually holds this whole existence together? (Laughter.) ... I tended to think that karma was quite dominant. For example, our karma brings us here. But you are saying that it is not so easy as that, not so ... So what is to keep the whole thing going?

[231]

S.: I think it is karma that has brought everybody here, in the sense of their own karma. But no doubt all sorts of other factors, of a non-karmic nature, have either helped them in getting here or have hindered them hindered them in the sense that, had those factors not been present, they might have got here last year or the year before! if you see what I mean. But, looking at it in more general terms, one may individually be very conscious that you are taking the initiative in relation to the world; that you are actually doing something; that you are generating, let us say, positive mental attitudes, positive volitions; that you are as it were creative in your attitude. So you have the feeling then that you are dominating the situation, dominating conditions; not that you are necessarily successful, or always defeat them objectively, but you have the inner feeling that you always take the initiative. Your being, or your attitude, is not all the time being determined just by what is happening to you. Do you see what I mean? It is in that sense that I speak of the karmaniyamas dominating the others that you are taking the initiative with regard to existence; you are not allowing the things that happen to you to completely control, or even predominantly control, your own mental attitude. Your own attitude, your own response, goes beyond what is actually happening to you, especially what is happening to you, not as a result as far as you can tell of your own past karma. Very often, we are conscious of things just happening to us. We seem not to have any choice. We seem quite powerless, things are just happening to us. But then again, sometimes we can feel that that isn't so, that we are taking the initiative, we are making certain choices, we are moving in a certain direction because we want to, even though we are having to overcome difficulties, overcome obstacles. So we don't feel so helpless then, we don't feel so

passive. Even though we may not always be objectively successful, at least we are making an effort. And to the extent that we are making an effort, we are creative, whether successful or not. So in that sense, again, the karmaniyama is dominant over the other niyamas, representing things that merely happen to us. As a result of the other niyamas we may experience illness; we may experience unpleasant extremes of cold and heat; we may experience physical injury and suffering. But we don't allow it, so to speak, to get us down. We maintain, or we retain, our own positive, affirmative, creative mental attitude, and in that way the karmaniyama in a positive sense remains dominant. I think this is characteristic of the individual, as distinct from the member of the group.

Gerry: Would you say, then, that if we were likely to blame our karma on things it wouldn't be taking the initiative?

S.: It is difficult to speak in terms of blaming our karma, because we don't really know, usually, whether something that happens to us is the result of our own karma or not. I was going to say, following on what I said just before, that when we speak of the Order as it were embodying the Bodhicitta, we are thinking then of, we might say, positive volition in the highest sense dominating external conditions or dominating the other niyamas. But I think what is important is to have a sense of oneself as taking the initiative; not of oneself as being all the time just on the receiving end of things. That can be very frustrating. Well, sometimes people don't even feel frustrated; they just get so used to it, they take it for granted. They don't think very much about it. That is their life. Well, in that case, they sink to an infra-individual level, one might say.

Kevin: With the example of Milarepa, who was able to bring to fruition past bad karma by experiencing much suffering in his last life, is it possible for us to extinguish for ourselves our past bad karma by giving ourselves a hard time? Or would be just be doing ourselves harm and nothing more? Can we manipulate karma in a constructive way by [following] Milarepa's example?

[232]

S.: One must remember that Milarepa committed what are called in the Pali tradition garoka(?) karmas. He committed murders. The results of garoka karmas have to be experienced either in this life itself or in the next life. So Milarepa realized that if he did not escape from the situation by gaining Enlightenment in this life itself, he was going to have a very difficult and a very hard time. It may well be that some of his sufferings in this life were the direct result of the very heavy unskilful karmas he had committed in this life; those karmas were not necessarily speeded up simply because he had committed himself to gaining Enlightenment. Whether we can deliberately expiate past karmas is difficult to say. But I think we need not bother about it, because they will catch up with us sooner or later, if we haven't in the meantime gained Enlightenment. There is no doubt about that, according to Buddhism. The important thing is not whether you experience them now or later on; the important thing is really that you at least gain Stream Entry as soon as possible, because once you gain Stream Entry you needn't bother. If you do experience the results of bad karmas performed in the past, so what? You are not creating any more bad karmas. And you are in a position to bear the results of the bad karma that you have committed with equanimity and with patience, which inasmuch as you practise equanimity and patience in those circumstances will contribute further to your spiritual development. So I don't think we need bother to think in terms of hastening the results of karma. They will arrive neither slowly nor

quickly; they will arrive when the time is ripe.

John: When you are talking about taking the initiative, do you think it possible to generalize that men would be more able to take initiative than women, granted that women are more passive?

S.: I am not so sure about that. It depends what about. Supposing you are living at home and you really need, let us say, a new pair of curtains. Do men hasten to take the initiative in that sort of matter? Do you see what I mean? So I think it is very difficult to generalize. I think there are certain matters in connection with which a woman is more likely to take the initiative; others in which a man is more likely to take the initiative. Whether the one or the other, on the whole, is more likely to take initiative is very difficult to say. Probably one would again need a statistical survey. I may say, from my own experience, that far more women take the initiative in writing to me than men. So there is one little example ...

John: You don't find women more passive in regard to their own spiritual development?

S.: Well, that is a specific area. It raises the question of what is passivity: whether one is not to distinguish between passivity and receptivity, and whether receptivity also is not a means of spiritual development. It raises all those sort of questions. Spiritual development is bound up with initiative, but I think one mustn't think of initiative as taking, necessarily, very overt and easily identifiable forms. It can also be quite a subtle thing. When you are meditating you are taking the initiative, because you are generating intensely positive, intensely skilful mental states; especially as you enter the dhyanas. You may seem, to the eye of the observer, just completely inactive, sitting there with your eyes closed, but the fact of the matter is you are intensely active, and you are generating extremely powerful karma, which is going to be productive of very definite results sooner or later probably sooner. So I think it is quite difficult to generalize in that way. I am not saying that you couldn't, if you had sufficient information at your disposal and analysed it properly, but again we have to gather our information first, and make our analysis.

Gerry: Bhante, I want to try to tie up two points you made earlier. One was when you were asked about collective karma. I think you said that there is no [233] collective karma that collective karma is just the sum of the karma of the individuals.

S.: Yes, to the extent that those karmas coincide.

Gerry: Then you talked about the arising of the Bodhicitta within the Order. Surely you could view that as a collective karma which is outside the sum of the karmas of the individuals within the Order?

S.: This introduces a question, or a difficulty, of, one might say, terminology; because one has got as it were different levels of development. It is possible to go beyond the individual in the ordinary sense, especially when Insight arises. One can speak of someone in whom Insight has arisen as an Individual Individual with a capital I, as it were but that person, if you can even speak of them as a person, represents a new spiritual mutation, as it were. And when a number of such people get together, then again their interaction results in a further new mutation in respect of each and every one of them; except that it is no longer really appropriate to speak in terms of 'each and every one of them'. So when I speak of the

Bodhicitta as arising within the spiritual community, I am thinking of a possibility which transcends even Individuality in the sense that we usually understand it, which is certainly not a collective phenomenon, but which is not individual either in the sense that we usually understand individuality. I have gone into this rather thoroughly in a set of excerpts from seminars that I have just edited a few days ago for the forthcoming *Mitrata*, so you will be able to read all about it in that.

Chairman: The next question comes from Vessantara, on the ethics of intention.

Vessantara: In the text Gampopa makes the point that actions have different consequences depending on the person to whom they are done; for instance, to slander a Bodhisattva would be worse than to slander an ordinary person. I have heard you explain that in terms of how you need to be in a worse mental state to slander somebody who is very full of metta and positive.

S.: Yes, assuming that you know what they are know, in a sense what they are or who they are.

Vessantara: Would that be the traditional explanation? One does get the impression from the text that it is almost seen more like ...

S.: I would have said from the text that it is seen more magically than that. But, yes, my explanation here is my explanation, trying to make sense of that particular teaching. But I think it is the correct explanation; I don't think that phenomenon can be understood either mechanistically or magically.

Vessantara: How do you think Gampopa would try to square what he says with the fact that in Buddhist tradition karma is an ethics of intention and that it is your mental state which is the determining factor?

S.: I don't know how he would. If he was here, perhaps we could ask him. But we can't speculate, really.

Vessantara: That question hasn't arisen in tradition?

S.: Not to my knowledge. For instance, a similar question arises in a similar connection; for instance, why should it be worse to kill your mother or your father than anybody else leaving aside an arhant or a Buddha? It is because the nature of the tie is such that it requires a much greater disruption for it to [234] be possible for you to commit that act. Your tie with your mother or your father is particularly close, much closer than that with an ordinary person, other factors being equal. So the fact that you are capable of disrupting even that tie means that you are capable of an even greater degree of unskillfulness. In the same way, if you were to see a Buddha and know, so to speak, that it was a Buddha, and if you could bring yourself to wound that Buddha or to kill that arhant, it would be in a way going against your own deepest instincts, in a way going against your own better self, to an incredible and extraordinary degree. So the karmic consequences would be correspondingly more serious. This is how I look at it. It is not explained in this way in tradition, but this is the only way in which I have been able to make sense of that teaching. It seems quite reasonable to look at it in that way. For instance, supposing you had at birth been separated from your mother, and

supposing you had never known her, never known who she was. Maybe you had met her, say, 20 or 30 years later, 40 years later, not knowing that she was your mother, and had quarrelled with her and killed her. Would you be guilty, under the law of karma, of the offence of killing your mother? I would say personally that you would not be guilty, because you had not known that it was your mother.

Vessantara: But the tradition would take Oedipus to task?

S.: I don't know. I am not sure. Tradition, to the best of my knowledge, has not discussed the matter from that point of view. Oedipus was not guilty of killing his father, nor was he guilty of sleeping with his mother: not in terms of the ethics of intention. But under the old sort of semi-magical taboos, he was guilty, and perhaps he was guilty in his own mind because he accepted those taboos. Perhaps even today, if someone were to realize that the person well, let's not take it so far as to say that they had killed; say, the person that they had hit was actually their own father or their own mother whom they had never known before: perhaps, in addition to feeling sorry that they had hit another human being, they would also feel sorry that that other human being turned out to be their own mother or father. You probably couldn't escape some such feeling. You would feel, rationally or irrationally, that your action of hitting that person was all the worse, inasmuch as it was your mother or your father even though you had not realized it at the time.

Chairman: The next question comes from Dhammarati, on unwanted criticism.

Dhammarati: Actually, do you mind if I don't ... ?

S.: I thought there was no such thing as unwanted criticism! Maybe there is.

Chairman: We'll leave that for the moment. The next questioner is Bram, on erroneous views: clarifying a section of the text.

Bram: It is on p.78 of the text, the second half of the page, No. 10, erroneous views. The second erroneous view is said to be 'the view that from the acceptance of the Truth of the Path the Truth of Disappearance does not follow.' Could you explain that?

S.: Ah yes, this is simply Guenther is in a way not helped by translating nirodha as 'disappearance'. Nirodha means cessation; it is a synonym of Nirvana. 'The view that from the acceptance of the Truth of the Path the Truth of Disappearance does not follow': this means the view that, even if you follow, let us say, the Noble Eightfold Path, you won't gain Nirvana. In other words, the view that spiritual practice, or the spiritual life, has in fact no result this is a wrong view.

Bram: That when you have that view, you are actually not on the Path?

[235]

S.: No, no: the view that someone may have that, in a general way, anybody who follows a particular spiritual path will not experience any result of that, will not gain any such state as Nirvana. That is a wrong view. It is not that you yourself, following the Path, might hold that wrong view; no, somebody else presumably not following the Path might hold that wrong view. In other words, the view that, even though the Truth of the Path has been accepted even

though, by whomsoever, the Path is being followed the fruit in the form of Nirvana will not accrue; that belief is a wrong view. It undercuts, one might say, the law of karma within that particular context. Perhaps I should mention that, in the Buddha's day, there was a view, a wrong view that is often referred to, that such things as dana and sila in other words, following the Path do not have any result; do not as it were lead anywhere, don't have any spiritual significance. This is a form of that kind of view: that spiritual practices do not have any result in, in this case, the form of Nirvana. In other words, the right view is that, if you follow a spiritual path, if you practise dana, sila, bhavana and so on, if you follow the Noble Eightfold Path, there must be a result; Nirvana must accrue to you. It is an unalterable law, as it were.

Chairman: OK, so we move into a different area.

S.: How are we getting on with time?

Chairman: We are getting on quite well. We have got through more than half the questions that are designated for today. The next question comes from Prasannasiddhi on affection.

S.: I hope he gives the Pali and Sanskrit for that.

Prasannasiddhi: ... It is a two-part question:

- 1) To what extent do you think physical affection is important as part of the foundation of the spiritual life?
- 2) If a person was not open to being affectionate with other members of the spiritual community, would this have an effect on the nature of their openness to their spiritual friends in more exalted matters?

S.: Let's put those again: first one?

Prasannasiddhi: To what extent do you think physical affection is important as part of the foundation of the spiritual life?

S.: What does one mean by 'physical affection'? One might say, if one wanted to be pedantic, that it was almost a contradiction in terms, because affection doesn't it represent a mental attitude? So in what sense is one speaking of physical affection? Does one mean the physical expression of affection? Is this what one means?

Prasannasiddhi: Yes. (Laughter.)

S.: ... affection? So, all right, understanding 'physical affection' in that way, what is the question?

Prasannasiddhi: To what extent do you think the physical expression of affection is important as part of the foundation of the spiritual life?

S.: Why should the expression of anything be important? Why should the expression of, let us say, a positive mental state (let us take it that affection is skilful, [236] let us assume that) in

what way, or for what reason, is the expression of that positive or skilful mental state important? Or why is it that it is important to give physical expression to any positive or skilful mental state? That is the broader question.

Prasannasiddhi: To encourage it?

S.: To encourage it? Is that actually what happens? If you give physical expression to, in this case, a positive mental state, does that actually strengthen or confirm that state? Does that so happen? People should know from their own experience.

Mike: It seems to have an actual result, in a way, it makes you feel happy, it's going to come out, you know.

S.: Yes; ah, yes, right. So one might say it is a natural thing, that any mental state not even necessarily just a positive one, any mental state quite naturally finds an external expression physically and verbally. This would seem to be the natural situation. So that it would seem that, if you entertain feelings of affection towards anybody, it would seem to be natural, so to speak, that they find not only physical but also verbal expression, and that that expression, whether physical or verbal, tends to strengthen the feeling, in this case the affection itself. Would this not seem to be logical? In that case, if it is important to strengthen affection, it would seem to be also important to strengthen, or to permit or encourage or allow, the expression, whether physical or verbal, of that same affection. Would one agree with that? Does that seem reasonable or logical?

Voices: I think so.

S.: So what does one mean by physical expression? One has to come down to that; come down to specifics. What does one mean? Does one mean slapping somebody on the back? Or does one mean bringing them a cup of tea? What does one mean?

Prasannasiddhi: Both of those. (Laughter.) I suppose plus warmth, embracing your spiritual friends.

S.: I think probably the question that arises is, at what point would a physical and verbal expression of affection a physical expression in particular possibly modify the nature of the affection itself from possibly skilful to unskilful by, let us say, for instance, the introduction of a sexual element? That question would have to be faced, wouldn't it? Prasannasiddhi: Well, would that actually be unskilful, if there was a sexual element entering in?

S.: Well, if as a result of the entry of that sexual element, the positive feeling of affection became changed completely, let us say, into a feeling of sexual craving, presumably that would be a change for the worse.

Prasannasiddhi: Yes, that would be. But then isn't there also an idea of visualizing Tara as a means of sublimating sexual energies? So could you perhaps not say that, if there was a sexual element in affection but it wasn't carried indulged, as it were that would actually

S.: I think probably you have to recognize that in all physical expressions of affection, even taking the affection to be quite positive and skilful in itself, there is probably some tinge,

however slight, of sexuality that is probably inseparable from physical contact between one human being and another. It is probably a question of the degree to which that affects the feeling of affection, [237] in the positive, skilful sense from which we started. One clearly has to be careful that even if there is a slight tinge, let us say, of sexuality or sexual feeling arising from the physical contact, nonetheless the overall mental feeling or attitude is definitely one of affection in the positive and skilful sense. With that proviso, probably one can say that, yes, the physical expression of affection is important. Then what was the second question?

Prasannasiddhi: If a person was not open to being affectionate with other members of the spiritual community this is with specific reference to the first part of the question would this have an effect on the nature of their openness to their spiritual friends in more exalted matters?

S.: I am just wondering whether the question of temperament comes in at all here. It may be a red herring, but I am just wondering whether it does. Are there some people who by temperament, let us say this begs the question of what is temperament or character type less inclined to express their feelings physically and verbally? Or is that perhaps due to conditioning? What do we find in the case of children? Do children normally express their feelings physically and verbally quite freely is this the norm or the natural thing with children? Anybody ever seen a child recently? (Laughter.)

Dharmadhara: Not recently, but it is ...

S.: Yes. So that would suggest that, within perhaps very slight limitations, that is the normal human tendency to express. So perhaps one can't say that basically there are different types in this respect, even though people may have been subject to different degrees of conditioning; and therefore one is to expect that a normal, healthy human being not inhibited, not blocked, as we say (whatever that might mean: like a drain! so therefore having to be unblocked, like a drain) should express [feelings], especially if they are skilful feelings, physically, mentally and verbally, because they want to strengthen those skilful feelings anyway. So what was the question? Let's get back to the question; this was just clearing the ground.

Prasannasiddhi: If a person was not open to being affectionate (with regard to physical affection and even other levels) with other members of the spiritual community, would this have an effect on the nature of their openness to their spiritual friends with regard to more exalted matters?

S.: I think one has to look at this word 'open, openness'. It is a very popular one in the FWBO, isn't it? I would prefer to say that if you didn't have, let us say, an overall attitude of being willing to express, let us say, your affection on, so to speak, the lower level, the chances are that you wouldn't find it easy to express it on higher levels either. I think the difficulty, or the reluctance, would probably run all the way through. But what do people have to say from their own experience about this? (Silence; then laughter.) They don't have any experience!

: Yes, yes.

S.: Yes what?

: That is on a lower level. Then it does seem to stick on the other levels, because you are

hindering your expression and your general attitude of positivity.

S.: But verbal expression also is very important, and the deeper your involvement with your spiritual friends the more important that verbal expression becomes. Perhaps, as you become more and more deeply involved with your spiritual friends, verbal expression becomes more important than physical expression. Physical [238] expression, after all, has very definite limits, but verbal expression has comparatively hardly any limits at all, because one can range so widely and share so much through verbal means. But perhaps if you did have difficulty expressing your affection, for instance, physically, you might well have difficulty expressing it verbally and therefore have difficulty expressing yourself to your spiritual friend verbally in a general way. But you just have to consult your own experience and just find out whether that is in fact the case. Considering that it is a matter that does relate directly to one's own experience, people seem to have remarkably little to say about it!

Dhammarati: Thinking on the level of manners as it were, ... a bit more mentally, I wonder if there is not a parallel to the expression of physical affection?

S.: Oh, I am sure. Some people just come and slap you on the back in a way that almost knocks you over or knocks the breath out of your body, while somebody else may just give you a very gentle touch. Well, perhaps they mean more or less the same sort of thing; in each case it is an expression of affection, but in the one case one feels that the affection is perhaps rather rough, rather coarse, even, whereas in the other case it is rather more refined. One has perhaps to take that into consideration. You aren't necessarily expressing more affection because you express it in a grosser way, so to speak; there can be more subtle and refined methods, depending on the sort of person you are, your own degree of subtlety and refinement. But this is not a sort of, let us say, a let-out for anybody! Your expression of your affection should not be so refined, so subtle, that nobody ever sees it! That may come later. Anyway, have we dealt with those two questions?

Prasannasiddhi: Yes, that will be something to go on with.

Bram: I wanted to make a comparison. I get the impression that the ability to express feelings is not always developed in the same way as the feelings are developed. If somebody can express his feelings very well it doesn't mean that he has highly felt feelings, as compared to a person who doesn't express himself

S.: This is true. Some people can be very glib; some people have got better command of language than others. But I think usually one can tell the difference. Someone may be relatively inarticulate, but what they do say can nevertheless convey very definite affection. And somebody else can give you all sorts of verbal assurances. But you can feel that there is not very much behind it; you can usually tell the difference, if you are at all experienced. If you are very young, you may fall for that sort of thing, but as you get older you learn to detect the difference. And sometimes you learn to detect affection under apparent roughness, and sometimes you learn to detect coldness, even, underneath what seem to be expressions of affection.

Chairman: OK, so we move into another question. It is from Dhammarati, on the Third Precept.

Dhammarati: I must admit to being kind of interested in the paragraph on sex in 'Karma and Its Result' and a sort of general question...

Tape 23, Side 2:

if the points in Gampopa's paragraph of a social and ethnic character, and how many of them really had a psychological significance. We did discuss that in the group and we came up with some situations ... Some that I was particularly interested in, in a manner of speaking, were sex with one's mother, sex in the daytime, and sex with men; and why these should be so especially the emphasis on sex with one's mother ...

[239]

S.: It would seem that in all cultures there is a very strong taboo on incest. It does seem to have a definite biological significance. I have discussed this in Aspects of Buddhist Morality, with a long quotation from Darlington, so I will refer you to that. It would seem that the observance of the incest taboo does definitely have a biological, and therefore a survival, value; so let's leave that there, because I have dealt with it in that particular essay.

Dhammarati: Does contraception affect that? Does that mean that the incest taboo is less important? That it's not going to become a procreative relationship, just as it were

S.: You could argue like that, but you might find it quite difficult in practice to separate that particular aspect in particular instances, let us say. Perhaps the taboo is so deeply built into human nature now that it is almost genetically impossible to violate it. You have such a deeply inbuilt resistance to behaving in that way.

Dhammarati: The second way I was surprised to see was sex with men.

S.: No, you have missed one; what was the second one?

Dhammarati: Ah, sex in daylight.

S.: This is actually mentioned from time to time in Buddhist texts and, I believe, other spiritual texts. I think the significance of this simply is that the demand for sex is excessive; because the night time is considered the appropriate time for that, because it is generally considered a shameful activity and therefore others should not see, etc. etc. So to be sexually active during the daytime as well as during the night is considered a manifestation of extreme libidinousness, and therefore, from a spiritual point of view, certainly, and from an ordinary ethical point of view, to be reprehensible. And then?

Dhammarati: ... sex with men.

S.: I think this goes back to ethnic values, because one does find this in all ethnic religions; you will certainly find it in Hinduism and it seems to have been taken over from Hinduism by Buddhism, or even taken over, in the case of Tibetan Buddhism, from the primitive Bon tradition. One finds it in Judaism, and so on. Because in the early ages of history, when these ethnic religions were developed, it was extremely important to multiply the human race; that was necessary to survival; you needed as many hands as possible, you wanted to do nothing which would hinder the production of human beings. So, for this reason, various forms of

contraception were not even known, were not even devised at that time; and sexual contact with members of one's own sex is a means, one might say, of having sex without procreation; in a way it is a form of contraception, you might say. This is why the other forms of sexual practice which are mentioned are considered taboo, because they don't result in procreation. And this is why one might say, even within Christianity now as a result of its Jewish heritage, certainly in, say, the Catholic church, the only acceptable form of sexual activity is within marriage and for the purpose of procreation. That is the logical result of that sort of attitude. It seems to have its roots there, in the requirements of the ethnic religions due to the particular cultural and social situation in which they found themselves. But the overall thrust, one might say, of Buddhist teaching on this subject is obviously to minimize sexuality as such, and to cultivate affection, to cultivate the positive emotion of metta which is quite sharply distinguished from sexual feeling; quite sharply distinguis

hed from pema and sineha(?) in Pali. [240] Prasannasiddhi: I was going to ask if you thought that this ethnic urge towards procreation, to multiply the number of human beings, if there was a hangover from that; in a way you have answered that question. There is a hangover in the modern world, a psychological

S.: I think in a way there is, because there has been a need to be careful not to under-procreate for a very long time. I don't remember when the human race reached the billion figure when was it? It wasn't all that very long ago. So, for hundreds of thousands, even for a few million years, there were, relatively speaking, just a handful of human beings. The human race was quite small in respect of numbers. So it became quite important, one might say, that individual human communities should safeguard their numbers. Everyone was interested in multiplying. If you were a father, head of a family, and you had two or three wives, and all those wives had five or six, seven or eight children, you had a whole horde of people at your disposal; you could cultivate more; you could have more cattle, more sheep, more goats, whatever it was, more cows, more wealth. You had more influence, more power. So all that depended on population. And with regard to the larger groups, the more people there were the more they could bring the surrounding countryside under their control, and so on; the more civilization was possible, the more culture was possible. But we have long ago reached a point where we don't have to think in terms of preserving the human race. It is the least threatened species of all apart from the atom bomb, of course. It is the other species that are threatened by the human race. But for so many generations were we accustomed to thinking in terms of procreation, that we can't help thinking in those terms even now. Our natural tendency is that way. So we tend also to think of sexual activity in those terms, or being for that particular purpose. If you were completely rational, I suppose you should just suspend sexual activity completely, because there is really not the need for it now that there used to be. But man not being a rational creature, and his emotions taking a long time to catch up with his intellect, we still have this rather old-fashioned habit of carnal copulation. But never mind, we'll grow out of it gradually! Some people no doubt do feel it is quite irrelevant to the requirements of the spiritual life, but here they are, hampered with this need or with this function. But perhaps, after a few more hundred generations, people will be more genuinely angelic, let us say. Meanwhile, we are sort of intermediate. We might say sex is like the appendix; it is something that doesn't really have any function any more, we could just as well get on without it! Or at least, you would need some part of the human race to attend to the business of continuing the human race, I suppose, but not everybody needs to be involved in that particular way. Perhaps there are too many of us anyway, already. Some do in fact argue that the comparatively high level of civilization and culture, even comparatively high

standards of living, in many of the Buddhist countries, was due to the fact that they had a large celibate, or at least non-procreating, monastic community, which kept the population down so that there was more than enough to go round for all. The population apparently reached its optimum level. Though we should accustom ourselves to thinking, perhaps, of human nature being transformed quite radically in future generations, we can't force the pace. For the time being, we have to bear those who are concerned with spiritual life this burden of sexuality; but never mind, future generations will be comparatively free from it!

Chairman: John has a point.

John: I am not sure how relevant it is now. I was just wondering, with regard to the taboo on sex with one's mother, if this was not in some way a necessary repression of sexual instincts in order that civilization should actually happen given that your earliest sexual feelings were probably towards your mother, and that that is repressed?

[241]

S.: Also there is the point that, according to some anthropologists, in the case of human beings and human sexual relations, bonding is very important. Obviously, the human child goes through a long period of growth and development, and is not independent nearly as quickly as the young of many other animals. So it is quite important that the parents should stick together for the bringing up of the child. That becomes more and more important as culture develops and transmission of culture by education is necessary; so that nowadays, or at least until very recently, it will be necessary for the parents to stay together almost for 20 years to educate the children. If they had, say, 10 or 12 children, as they had until very recently, perhaps they had to stay together for 30 to 40 years. So bonding was very important. So, in the case of sexual bonding, clearly, from the masculine point of view at least, the question of jealousy comes in; the intervention of any sexual rival is felt as threatening to that bonding. So, yes, it may well be that the male child's first sexual object is the mother, but then there is father to take into consideration; father is jealous. So, well, you get the Oedipus complex, don't you? And maybe there is something in that quite a lot in it. So, in the interests of, let us say, domestic harmony at least, those feelings on the part of the son have to be suppressed. This is quite apart from any purely biological argument; it is perhaps a cultural and anthropological way of looking at things. So those circumstances, those factors, would tend to suppress any overt manifestation of sexual feeling on the part of the son towards the mother, and in the same way on the part of the daughter towards the father or father towards the daughter. We do know, actually, as a result of modern sociological studies, that incest, even today, is far more common than people usually suppose. I remember my eyes were opened to this fact when I was quite young, when I went to work in the Public Health Department of the London County Council, the predecessor of the Greater London Council. I remember an elderly woman who had been a social worker for years and years, who used to be very fond of chatting to me during the lunch hour. She used to tell me that, in the course of her social work, she had come across an extraordinary number of cases of incest, usually father and daughter incest; and it is much more common, it seems, than people usually suppose. But it usually takes place on a quite low social and cultural level.

John: It seems to have a very bad effect as well, in my experience.

S.: Yes; actually, to go a little further into it, I do know, from what they told me, that there are quite a number of women, even within the FWBO, who have had such experiences in their

early life, whom it has marked, it has scarred psychologically quite badly. They are now having to cope with those experiences. I knew myself of an instance years ago, before the FWBO was formed. There was a young man coming to see me, and he eventually took me into confidence, and it transpired that his father was in prison for sexual assaults on girls; he used to go and see him from time to time; and it also transpired, at the time when it was discovered that he had been assaulting girls in this way, that he had had a sexual relationship with his own daughter, this young man's sister, since the age of 8, and it had gone on for years and years without apparently anybody knowing about it. I met the daughter, who was married by that time, but I had the impression it had had a quite bad effect on her; she seemed very, very cold, as though cut off from her emotions. That was the impression I got. And this young man, as a result of all these experiences in the family, had decided he was never going to get married, he was never going to have anything to do with sex. That was the effect it had had on him. I don't know what happened to him eventually. Anyway, that's all by the by, but it just goes to show that these things lurk beneath the surface of social life.

Chairman: We have to move on quite quickly. Bram had a point.

[242]

Bram: Just a point, Bhante: what John was saying about the ... supposed oedipus complex, I was wondering, if the father gave the child he couldn't always give it as much affection but gave the child quite a bit of affection, do you think that that would mitigate the arising of such an attitude? Because I thought we were assuming that a male baby, say, would have already an inbuilt sexual attitude, and I wondered if that was the case at such an early stage?

S.: Well, obviously, it depends on your notion of sexuality. Genital sexuality, as Freud no doubt would call it, doesn't manifest until later on in life, and it is really of that that we are talking. I think, in a general way, it is true that the experience of affection, perhaps affection physically expressed, does take a certain amount of pressure off sexuality as such, but I don't think it can, so to speak, abolish it altogether. So I rather doubt, even if very considerable affection had been shown by the father, say, to the son, whether that would entirely obviate the likelihood of sexual feeling on the part of the son towards the mother. It depends on all sorts of other circumstances. It depends on who else is present within the immediate family circle whether other women are present, and how much attention, say, the mother gives the son, and so on; and all these very variable factors. But I think it is a quite common thing that the growing boy, as he becomes aware of sexual feeling, becomes aware that a certain part of it, at least to begin with, goes towards those females who are in his immediate vicinity. They may sometimes include his own mother, sisters, aunts, even grandmother, and so on. Perhaps he might be rather disconcerted if he becomes aware of those feelings, but it does happen. Usually, of course, the feelings quite quickly are transferred outside the family circle and the normal genital development takes place. How many questions do we have left?

Chairman: I think we could successfully stop at the next question, and leave the rest to a similar sort of grouping tomorrow. The last one is Murray's question.

Murray Wright: This question deals with an attitude and one specific instance. When I was in the United States, staying in Boston, I met and had something to do with some of Chogyam Trungpa's disciples. At that time, it was quite fashionable, apparently Trungpa was alleged to have said that anyone who wasn't bisexual had something wrong with them. I wanted to know what you think of this attitude.

S.: I am rather surprised that Trungpa should have said that. What does one mean by bisexual? It is a rather ambiguous term. Did they make it clear what they meant by the term?

Murray: I think, in this instance, it was going to bed with both men and women, either together or on different occasions. But ... sexual make-up.

S.: I think it is generally agreed that the sexual instinct is a very versatile thing. I think it is generally agreed that, in the absence of very strong inhibitions, it can quite easily go this way or that. Well, we know that in certain cultures, in certain societies, it goes very easily towards animals. I saw a film a few years ago called *Padre Padrone* does anyone remember it? An Italian film, and it actually showed some quite shocking instances of this sort of thing among young boys in Sicily. I won't go into details, but as I say the sexual instinct is a very versatile thing. Freud spoke of what was it? the polymorphous perverse instinct of the infant, that the infant's sexual feeling, in the sense that you can speak of sexual feeling or sexual instinct at that level, can go in almost any direction, whether towards itself, or its own body, or towards the bodies of others, without any discrimination at all. But, as a result of our biological development, as a result of our cultural conditioning, usually, sexuality takes a specific form. I don't think one could go so far as to say that one isn't healthy unless one is [243] actively bisexual, but I think if there was a sort of normal, healthy sexual instinct present, and if certain possibilities due to circumstances were closed to one, if one wasn't able to take advantage of other possibilities, whatever they were, no doubt there was a certain imbalance and even perhaps a certain unhealthiness in one. I don't think that, in order to demonstrate one's healthiness, one would necessarily have to be fully overtly bisexual. But at least I think one shouldn't be bothered by the idea; at least one can say that. I think perhaps it is a bit suspect if anybody goes through life without having at least having mentally played with the idea of departing from their usual sexual norms. Perhaps one can't say more than that! Perhaps Trungpa may have been deliberately overstating the case, as a sort of skilful means, in order to counteract a certain middle-class American uptightness who knows? But I think it has been generally accepted that, as I said, sexuality is a versatile thing; it may take this form, it may take that form. One can't really regard this form as necessarily ethical and that form as necessarily unethical. But one need not go to extremes. Otherwise some people might end up feeling guilty that they don't have strong bisexual feelings or bisexual inclinations; and you are back where you started from, with feelings of guilt. Anyway, is that the last question?

Chairman: Yes.

S.: OK, we end on that note this evening.

[244]

Chairman: ... session of ch.6, 'Karma and Its Result'. But we are going to start with a question which was left over from a previous chapter, from Mike, on the Bardo.

Mike: Is the after-death bardo an experience produced by one's own mind, in which all the beings that you meet are nothing more than your own thought forms, or is it an experience in which you are still subject to external influences, where you can be in contact and communicate with other beings?

S.: Just read that again. (Mike reads it again.) There are various accounts. The account contained in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* suggests that your experience in the bardo is as it

were subjective; with, of course, the important exception of the experience that one has of what is called the Pure White Light, the Light of Reality, which cannot be described as being either subjective or objective; which transcends that dichotomy. But, apart from that important exception, it would seem that, for the greater part of the time at least, one's experience in the bardo is what one might call predominantly subjective. This is according to The Tibetan Book of the Dead; but, at the same time, there are references, I believe, in The Tibetan Book of the Dead itself to one experiencing immediately after death or shortly after death one's own physical body in the distance, and people gathered round it and mourning and so on. Then, of course, there is the account again according to The Tibetan Book of the Dead of the vision as it were of one's future parents; so that would seem to suggest, again, something objective. The general picture seems to be of a gradual withdrawal from and return to objectivity, with the greater part of one's experience in the bardo being as it were subjective. That seems to be the general pattern or general picture.

Mike: The Tibetan Book of the Dead is also based on the idea that people still alive can communicate with you when dead.

S.: On the other hand, the person in the bardo is admonished to reflect that 'these are all my own thought forms'; so it is as though one is dealing with two levels of reality a sort of psychological one and what one might call a metaphysical one. It is as though the person whom you as it were objectively perceive or hear is himself telling you, as it were, that you aren't really perceiving him and not really hearing him; he is your own thought form. So it does leave you, in a sense, in a rather odd kind of situation, neither real nor unreal, one might say. Perhaps that is the intention. This also ties up with the whole question of how literally one is to take the teaching of The Tibetan Book of the Dead, or whether one is to take [some] of it literally and perhaps other parts of it not literally. For instance, it is stated that the beings that one experiences in states of suffering or in the course of unpleasant experiences you may have in the bardo are created by one's own past karma and are in that sense, therefore, subjective, not actually objectively existing entities; though not that there are in Buddhism any objectively existing entities anyway. So, again, you come back to the point which I mentioned. Perhaps one is better advised to think, as I said, in terms of a relative withdrawal from, and a relative return to, objectivity in, let us say, the commonsense significance of the term, punctuated, of course, by one or more transcendental experiences.

Mike: At the risk of taking something you said perhaps too literally, I was wondering how you mentioned about the Western Buddhist Order establishing itself. [245] I was thinking about to what extent [one] can be in contact with other beings in the bardo, in the way that

S.: It would seem, on the basis of what I have just said, that you can be in contact with other beings as it were objectively on the borders of that experience at the beginning and at the end, but it is as though in the middle you are withdrawn into your own subjectivity. Perhaps it is like the sleep state: there is a deep sleep state in the middle, as it were, and then on the edges there are dream states and you sort of gradually wake up out of the dream state and sometimes you are still in the dream state while beginning to perceive objects around you again. Perhaps it is rather more like that. As for this question of the Order existing in the bardo, I as it were speculated on that in response to a question. It wasn't an idea which I originated myself.

Mike: There is just one other thing to do with the bardo I was wondering. To what extent is the bardo thought of as being karmically neutral, somewhere where you can't acquire any

karma, so to speak?

S.: I am not sure whether this statement is explicitly made, but it does seem to be regarded as a state of vipaka, that is to say result of karma rather than a state in which karma comes to be created. It is as though you have done your work, you have created your karma in the course of your earth life; now you as it were sit back and you begin to experience the consequences. So the world that you experience is a world of those consequences. It is therefore a subjective world; it is a world of experience, of receptivity, rather than of action, rather than of initiative, rather than of volition or karma. Though there are one or two exceptions to that, in the sense that, according to The Tibetan Book of the Dead, you may have one or more transcendental experiences and have, therefore, the opportunity, in a sense, of allying yourself with the content of that transcendental experience and gaining liberation in that way. Again, it is a bit like the dream state in which you can break through from the dream state itself to a higher reality. Traditionally, I think, the bardo is considered to correspond to the dream state.

Vessantara: If the bardo is a state where you don't generate karma, or perhaps can't generate karma, if you take the teaching literally that the book is being read, and almost all through the bardo you are presented with choices there is the ... Light coming in, ... and that seems to suggest that you can choose ...

S.: That does seem to be the supposition. But it would seem that, in the case of the average person, dying as it were in ignorance, especially ignorance of the teaching, they are in such a confused state that no initiative is possible. Perhaps there is only a glimmering of consciousness in any case during the course of the bardo. But, in the case of someone with experience of the teaching, especially experience of meditation, consciousness or awareness can be prolonged through the bardo experience much as it can be prolonged in the dream state. In the case of such a person, who preserves some degree of recollection even in the bardo state, yes, there is a possibility of hearing the teaching, of being reminded of certain truths, and even of acting in accordance with them. But that would be relatively exceptional. It is sometimes said that the average person barely experiences the bardo at all, due to the low level of their consciousness; though everybody, it would seem again, according to The Tibetan Book of the Dead, does momentarily experience the White Light; but that is quite literally a momentary experience. Sometimes, I believe, as far as I remember, the question is raised whether relatively Enlightened beings experience the bardo at all in the ordinary sense.

[246]

Mike: Could you please elaborate on that point, Bhante that relatively Enlightened beings hardly experience the bardo at all in the ordinary sense?

S.: Well, mainly because consciousness or awareness is prolonged, and consciousness is as it were self-directed and in exceptional cases the future rebirth is actually quite consciously, quite deliberately, chosen.

Mike: But how would this differ from the normal person's experience of the bardo?

S.: Well, for instance in the case of the ordinary person, the whole experience is confused or obscured. Perhaps The Tibetan Book of the Dead gives us a slightly misleading picture, because it suggests that something very clear, very definite, happens stage by stage. But that would seem to be, according to some accounts at least, a rather in a way idealized picture. It

would seem that the average person almost sort of hurries through the bardo as though it were a dark tunnel in which they just glimpse, very momentarily, very fragmentarily, all sorts of shapes and forms, and they are very quickly back in this life after a period of comparative unconsciousness. But, in the case of, as I have called them, the comparatively Enlightened, it is a different kind of experience. To begin with, much more like the experience described in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and then again much more conscious, much more controlled, without perhaps the terrifying visions at the end, or the experience of the whirlwind and falling over the precipice and all that kind of thing.

Mike: What do you mean by comparatively Enlightened beings?

S.: Those in whom there was a measure of actual Insight.

Mike: That would be the Insight of the Stream Entrant as opposed to that of the disciple, with a small 'i'?

S.: Yes, at least that, as distinct from insight with a small 'i'.

Kevin: Bhante, would people of different religious beliefs experience the bardo and all the various attractive and repulsive events that occur in the bardo in a different way? For instance, would a Christian see the White Light, and would he experience it in a different way because of his beliefs and convictions?

S.: Well, in the case of the White Light, the essence of the matter is that it is unconditioned; at that level you are not conditioned by your previous cultural formation, or even your previous religious formation. So it is not that the Pure White Light is the way in which Buddhists experience it and others might have another experience; no, don't take the expression Pure White Light literally, it is an experience of Ultimate Reality. So that would, in a manner of speaking, be the same for all. But as you come down to lower and lower levels, down to the archetypal plane, it may well be that your perception on that plane is determined, or to some extent conditioned, by your previous cultural heritage. I think there is more investigation of an empirical nature needed on this topic, but it would seem to be reasonable to suppose that. It would be rather odd if everybody had the same sort of experience that Tibetan Buddhists have, as detailed in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. It is very Tibetan, as it were; it is not even Indian, not Indian in the strict sense. In ancient Egypt there was a text which is sometimes called, in the West, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, but its imagery is entirely Egyptian. And similarly there is Christian imagery used in representations of after-death experiences in Christian art. So, yes, I think one can allow for a certain amount of cultural [247] conditioning in the bardo, with the exception of the experience of what *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* calls the White Light.

Gerry: Bhante, in answer to Mike's question on experiences of the bardo being subjective, you answered that, according to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, this was the case. I was wondering what was the position of the other Buddhist schools? Do they have the same position?

S.: Don't forget quite a few of the other Buddhist schools don't accept the existence of the bardo or the antarabhava to begin with, and it would seem it is mainly dealt with in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. I don't know that we have any other sources. I don't know that the

teachings of other schools on this subject have been preserved. There is a little bit of information in the Sarvastivada sources, but it is not nearly so rich as what we find in The Tibetan Book of the Dead or that whole tradition. There are many such Books of the Dead; there is not just the one that we are more familiar with.

Gerry: Within Buddhist literature?

S.: Within Tibetan Buddhist literature. There is a whole cycle of such works.

Gerry: Dealing with the antarabhava in Sanskrit ... ?

S.: There seems to be nothing at all except some reference in Sarvastivadin works, like the Abhidharmakosa. The term antarabhava is, of course, Sanskrit.

Gerry: Why is it that the Tibetans seem to have developed this aspect of the teaching and not the other schools?

S.: It is very difficult to say. One can say the Tibetans were especially interested in those things, but then that still leaves the question why should they have been particularly interested? It might have something to do with the general atmosphere of Tibet: that it was more conducive to yogic experimentation and retreat, all that kind of thing. That is a possible explanation.

Gerry: There wouldn't have been a doctrinal reason?

S.: There would seem not to be; because Sarvastivadin traditions went to China, and they didn't develop, apparently, that same interest in the after-death state. But then, of course, they did develop the traditions connected with rebirth in Sukhavati, in the Pure Land.

Vessantara: I just wanted to ask whether the other Books of the Dead in Tibetan literature differ very much in their content from the one we are familiar with.

S.: I think not substantially. There is a work on this which we have in Norfolk, in the Padmaloka library. I forget the name of the author, but it is on the Tibetan Books of the Dead generally. I think it is an accident that we have this particular one translated into English.

Chairman: The next question comes from Gary on dreaming.

Gary: I suspect you have started answering this one already, Bhante ... It is in five parts, and it results from regular recent dreams that I have had in which you have featured.

(1) Would the Bhante that appears in my dreams be the bearer of the archetype or the exemplar of an ideal?

[248]

(2) When you appear should I ask you for a teaching? [249]

(3) Could the teaching contain material from beyond my own resources i.e. beyond my own knowledge, understanding or experience?

(4) More generally, how should one best take advantage of lucid dreams, in other words, dreams in which one becomes aware that one is dreaming?

(5) When I do ask you for a teaching, why do you answer me in Latin? (Laughter.).

S.: Let's go through them one by one.

Gary: (1) Would the Bhante that appears in my dreams be the bearer of the archetype or the exemplar of an ideal?

S.: That depends, of course, on the way in which one distinguishes between the archetype and the ideal. Obviously, that distinction is one that occurs to one after one wakes up; so is there anything in the dream that lends itself to interpretation either way at the time? Does one experience that particular content in the dream state in terms of its being either an archetype or an ideal? Because one here comes up against the question of what one actually experiences and the interpretation to which you subject it afterwards.

Gary: Probably ... would be the exemplar of an ideal.

S.: Because, once you have woken up, you can make, in a sense, of the dream anything that you wish. It isn't that the dream is this or isn't that, or its meaning is this or isn't that. It isn't really quite like that. A dream, it would seem, is much more fluid. So, if you want to make it an archetype you can, if you want to make it an ideal you can. It depends on you what use you make of your dream; and perhaps it is better to make use of it as an ideal than simply as an archetype. But perhaps it isn't quite appropriate to describe that particular content of your dream as being literally an archetype or literally an ideal, as though it had to be objectively just that, just one or the other. It is entirely up to you, it depends on what your waking consciousness does with your own dream. You can if you like explain it all away as the result of indigestion! But that might be a pity; it might mean throwing away a perfectly good and useful dream.

Chairman: Dhammarati on that point.

Dhammarati: Is there nothing objective in a dream about a good place or a bad place? Energies are always very powerful in dreams, ... some seem like beings.

S.: Like?

Dhammarati: Like beings. Like significant beings.

S.: There are clearly different levels of dream experiences: some of the dreams you have are clearly the result of experiences you have had during the day, or during the previous few days, or are the result of some physical disturbance. But as all that as it were clears away, dreams seem to start to come from deeper levels of the psyche, and sometimes from very deep levels; then you have archetypal dreams, vividly coloured and full of significance, which can even be of some spiritual value. So it does seem that dreams are very much on different levels. What was the second one?

Gary: (2) When you appear should I ask you for a teaching?

S.: Again, it depends on you. If you have succeeded in retaining some kind of consciousness, some kind of awareness, in the dream, it is up to you to make the best possible use of that opportunity, if it is an opportunity. There is no harm, one might say, in asking a question, but one could take the view that the dream was, after all, your dream; so not only would the question be your question, the answer would be your answer. Unless, of course, you in a manner of speaking broke out of the dream, in the strict sense, altogether and were in contact with some other level, so to speak.

Gary: You suggest that that is a quite, and even a very, unusual thing to happen breaking into that level?

S.: I think it is relatively unusual, yes.

Gary: And if you did, you would know that you had done that?

S.: Oh yes, you would have to be in the first place quite aware, in the dream state, that you were dreaming.

Gary: But beyond that, I assume that it would be easy for you to know that what you were hearing was a result of you breaking through to that stage?

S.: It would no doubt carry a certain conviction. And thirdly?

Gary: That was the third point, really. The fourth point was how one should best take advantage of lucid dreams.

S.: In the lucid dream you can direct your experience, and the temptation is to create for yourself a dream which is merely pleasurable. If you can, you should create a dream which is definitely inspiring; perhaps try to create a dream of a Buddha realm, or of Sukhavati, or something of that sort. You are quite able to do that in the dream state if you are conscious and aware, and therefore able to direct the dream and determine the nature of your own dream experience. This sometimes does happen. Then what was the last one?

Gary: When I ask you for a teaching, why do you answer me in Latin?

S.: Well, I would have thought the answer to that was quite obvious: that somehow you have got into contact with the St Jerome archetype! (Laughter.) You should listen carefully and try to see exactly what kind of Latin it is.

Gary: I don't speak Latin!

S.: That raises, of course, the question how you know it is Latin, and not, say, Pali or even Italian.

Gary: Oh, I hope I might know the difference between Latin and Pali!

S.: Perhaps you should listen carefully and try to remember, bring back into consciousness, the waking state, at least a few words. There is that famous dream by William James. I have mentioned it before but I will mention it again, because some of you may not have heard

about it: that William James had a dream in which the whole mystery of existence, the whole secret of life, was revealed to him. So he sat up in a half-awake state and scribbled it down. When he woke up finally, he read what he had written, and it went like this (see if I can remember it properly. Oh dear, I must make sure I get it the right way round, otherwise the story spoils in the telling):

Higamus hogamus, woman is monogamous; [250]
Hogamus higamus, man is polygamous. (Laughter.)

This is a perfectly true story. It was a cruel disappointment to William James! So if you could bring up from your dream some little scrap of Latin, it might be quite illuminating, quite revealing!

Ted: If you have a lucid dream, do you believe it useful to, say, practise meditation or a Puja, and could you get into a dhyanic state?

S.: In a sense, you are in a dhyanic state. But I think the value of the lucid dream is that you can direct your dream experience, and in this way you may be able to create for yourself possibilities of experience that you would not ordinarily have had. That is why I mentioned, for instance, the experience the dream, if you like, the directed or guided dream of the Pure Land; because you might have read about it, but you would not have had the actual experience, in all likelihood. But in that sort of lucid dream state you are able to give yourself that kind of experience which would be very inspiring and very moving indeed. So probably that is the best of use to make of that sort of dream experience, the experience of lucid dream.

Ted: If the lucid type dream can be valuable, should one be involved in practices that might actually bring about the lucid dream, techniques that might stimulate awareness?

S.: There are various techniques, one of which, of course, is the repetition of a mantra immediately before going to sleep, with as much concentration and intensity as you can. That is the commonest method. If you can actually fall asleep reciting the mantra, that is supposed to be best.

Danavira: While we are on the small hours of the night, could you tell me why the Buddha said that 'We only sleep for a portion of the night, we don't sleep for the whole of the night?'

S.: Buddhas?

Danavira: The Buddha said he just slept for the first watch of the night, or the second, not the third and fourth, that kind of thing?

S.: There is Buddhaghosa's account of the way in which the Buddha spent his day. It is well known, according to that account and various references in the suttas, that the Buddha is supposed to have spent the hours let's say the two hours immediately before the dawn conversing with the devas. I have spoken about this before; I don't know if anybody [here] was present, maybe some months ago. And I said that it had occurred to me that that experience of the Buddhas conversing with the devas was analogous to the dream experience. What in our case is the dream state, in the case of the Buddha is that state of conversing with devas, or being as it were in contact with devas, or that sort of level, one might say, of, in a

sense, archetypal experience. Because the Buddha continues to be a human being, in a sense, but his experience is radically transformed inasmuch as he is a Buddha. He appears to be in a waking state, as we are, but clearly his experience of the waking state is different from ours. Similarly, his experience of the deep sleep state; a Buddha would never lapse into complete unconsciousness. In the same way, his experience of the dream state; a Buddha would not have dreams, for instance dreams in the sense of representations of unfulfilled desires, in the way in which ordinary people would. So it is as though, in a Buddha's case, that experience of meeting devas, as it is called, takes the place of the dream state, the dream experience. This is how I personally look at it. You can, of course, take it quite literally that the Buddha devoted those particular hours of the night to meeting [251] with devas; there is no reason why one should not take it in that sense, too. But that is the traditional account.

Prasannasiddhi: So he would actually converse with the devas in his dreams?

S.: No, it's not that. What in us is dream, in the case of the Buddha is, one might say, is conversing with the devas; not that he was dreaming and in his dream he conversed with the devas; no, not that. It was a different experience altogether, but analogous to what in us is the dream state.

Chairman: The next question is ... topic from Steve.

Steve: Given that there is a transcendental order of cause and effect, is it misleading to continue to use the terms conditioned and unconditioned to describe the mundane and the Transcendental given that you have used the terms compounded and uncompounded, confectioned and unconfectioned? Which of these do you consider is a more appropriate terminology?

S.: Yes, this is true, this is something I have discussed several times recently. If one goes back to the original Pali and Sanskrit, one has got the terms *samskṛta* and *asamskṛta*; literally compounded and uncompounded, or, as we more often say, conditioned and unconditioned. But the literal meaning, the literal translation, is definitely compounded and uncompounded, or confectioned and unconfectioned. That would be still more literal. But when we speak of conditionality, when we speak of phenomena arising in dependence on certain conditions, the term there is usually *pratīyaya*, as in *pratītya samutpāda*, or *paccaya* in Pali, *paṭicca samuppāda*. So, yes, it can be misleading to use the same term, 'conditioned', for that which is *pratīyaya* and also for that which is *samskṛta*. Yes, this can give rise sometimes to confusion.

Steve: So on that basis would you recommend that we approach that more correctly and technically when we use these terms?

S.: One can speak, for instance, of transcendental conditionality. That does not translate 'uncompounded conditionality', but it translates 'positive irreversible conditionality', as I have termed it. Of course, there is the question of the relation between that positive irreversible conditionality, which you get at the upper end of the Spiral, and the *asamskṛta*. That raises a quite different question, because those two terms seem to apply to the same order of reality. But I would say that the solution lies in the fact that, in the one case, you are thinking of that order of reality in temporal terms, in terms of duration, and in the other in spatial terms. Because that which is incomposite is that which does not have parts; and if a thing has parts it occupies space. So if you say that something does not have parts and does not occupy space,

you are using, clearly, spatial terms. In the same way, when you speak of a transcendental irreversible sequence of conditions, inasmuch as you speak of it as being irreversible and as a sequence, you are using temporal language, you are speaking the language of duration. So perhaps it can be seen in that way. Because we cannot but think and speak of things either in terms of time or in terms of space; but ultimately the two orders, or the two ways of speaking, coincide in their meaning. Though it is very difficult to bring the two meanings together, the two modes of thought together, in a single act of thought, one might say.

Bernie(?): Bhante, I am not quite clear now. What do we use the word 'conditioned' to mean, then, if it doesn't mean ?

S.: Well, actually, one uses it in two almost contradictory senses. You use 'the conditioned' for that which arises in dependence on conditions; but then of course you have got two orders of happening, let us say, where there is an arising of [252] things in dependence on conditions: one reversible, where you have a cyclical order, and the other irreversible, where you get a spiral order. So within the spiral order there is conditionality; you call it a transcendental conditionality. But that transcendental conditionality corresponds to the Unconditioned, so there is a sort of verbal contradiction. Do you see what I mean? But that is because, in the one case, you are using the language of time, and in the other you are using the language of space. One can go a little further than that, but perhaps we will leave it there for the time being. But, yes, that double use of the term 'conditionality' and so on can be confusing.

Bernie: I think you said in Mitrata, 'Perfect Vision', that 'conditioned' means 'limited'.

S.: 'Conditioned' means arising in dependence on conditions, and arising only when the appropriate conditions are present, and in that sense limited, in that sense contingent.

Dharmadhara: In Buddhism, is it correct to use the word 'unconditioned'? Is there anything which is unconditioned?

S.: If one uses 'unconditioned' to translate the Sanskrit *asamskrta* or Pali *asamkata*, well, yes, you can use the expression 'Unconditioned'. But that is not a literal translation. The literal translation, as I said, would be 'uncompounded' or 'incomposite' or 'unconfected'; 'not put together'. *Samskrta* it is the same word as in 'the Sanskrit language' is 'that which is put together'. The *asamskrta* is 'that which is not put together'. It is not put together because it doesn't consist of any parts. In philosophical terminology, it is simple, it is impartite. It cannot be taken apart because it doesn't consist of parts. It is, in a manner of speaking, just one thing.

Dharmadhara: Would it be better to avoid 'unconditioned' where possible?

S.: Perhaps it would be, except that in English usage, in Western philosophical usage, we don't really have a term such as 'the incomposite'. It doesn't have any resonance to it, it doesn't have any sort of connotation, whereas 'the Unconditioned' does. Though perhaps it may be, so to speak, more nuisance than it is worth, if it leads to confusion with the other usage of the term conditioned.

Dhammarati: In some of the early lectures, Bhante, there is an apparent paradox, because Transcendental experience, which has been described in terms of Unconditioned experience,

had to be discontinuous with the Path and the conditions that you were setting up. Is this discontinuity just because of the terms that are being used, or is there actually an experiential discontinuity?

S.: There is discontinuity in the sense that there is a qualitative difference. On the other hand, there is, one might say, no discontinuity inasmuch as within the Spiral, so to speak, the first of the Transcendental links or nidanas arises in dependence on the last of the mundane links. So, strictly speaking, I suppose one would have to say that there is neither complete discontinuity nor complete continuity, but a relation of conditionality; that is just what the term conditionality means: neither uninterrupted continuity

Tape 24, Side 2 or an actual breach, which is in a way something that we find it quite difficult to think in terms of.

Dhammarati: Is that analysis what happens in rebirth?

[253]

S.: Yes, but neither the same nor different. So, yes, it is one continuous process, but not continuous in the sense of the opposite of discontinuous.

Barry: You are saying that it is not continuous or discontinuous between the last link in the mundane and the first in the Transcendental; but would that be the same for, say, between our two mundane links as well?

S.: That's true, yes.

Barry: So you have got exactly the same problem, have you, in ?

S.: Well, you have got the same problem if it is a problem.

Barry: So it's not really a special case between the mundane and the Transcendental?

S.: Not really; because if you have, say, one mundane nidana arising in dependence on another, and then in dependence on that second mundane nidana there arises a Transcendental nidana, let us say: [then], in a sense at least, abstractly speaking the relationship is exactly the same; because that second mundane nidana could only arise in dependence on that first mundane nidana. In the same way, that first Transcendental nidana could only arise in dependence on that second mundane nidana. That first Transcendental nidana could not have arisen in dependence on that first mundane nidana. So, at least abstractly, so to speak, the relation between the succeeding and the prior nidana in each case, whether both are mundane or whether one is mundane and the other Transcendental, is in principle the same; though neither complete continuity nor absolute discontinuity. But, in the case of a mundane nidana succeeded by another mundane nidana, there is no qualitative change; whereas, in the case of a mundane nidana succeeded by a Transcendental nidana, there is a qualitative change, though the general nature of the relationship between the two nidanas remains the same.

Barry: How do you mean, there is no qualitative change [between] the mundane links?

S.: Because you are still on the cyclical order. Whereas, once the first of the Transcendental

nidanās has arisen, you are on the Spiral.

Barry: But it's like your experience is rising in quality, though, isn't it, as you go up?

S.: Yes, in a sense, because you could say that there is a degree of qualitative difference, if you can use that expression, between the first and the second of the mundane nidānas. It is because of that that the first of the Transcendental nidānas is able to arise in dependence on the second of the mundane nidānas and not in dependence on the first. It means that, with the second of those mundane nidānas, you have reached what I believe is called in some other contexts a sort of critical mass; and then something as it were of a different order happens. But the general principle of its happening is the same as the general principle of other happenings further down the scale, as it were.

Pavel: It seems to me that the use of the terms 'conditioned' and 'unconditioned' if we are just clear [about] the type of conditions we mean there could be no confusion, because there are the two kinds of conditioned.

S.: Right, yes,

Pavel: psychological and ...

[254]

S.: Right. If you think clearly, and are well aware of the meaning of the words that you use and why you use them, there should not be any confusion at all. The confusion arises, really, because people use words but don't always think very clearly about the meaning of the words that they use.

Vessantara: Would it be less confusing, do you think, rather than talking in terms of contacting the Unconditioned, to talk about moving to a level of conditionality which transcends time and space? Would that be a better language to use?

S.: Yes, it is the language of time again rather than the language of space. Instead of speaking in terms of reaching out and as it were touching something there, which is a quite traditional Buddhist idiom, one can speak in terms of what did you say? What was the expression you used?

Vessantara: Moving into a level of conditionality which transcends time and space.

S.: Yes; again, the language is spatial: 'level' suggests space, doesn't it?

Vessantara: I was just thinking that if you use 'Unconditioned' it does seem to introduce a confusion that you get because you have got the upper levels of the Spiral Path where one stage is still arising in dependence upon another, and it's hard to square that with the idea of that being the Unconditioned.

S.: Of course, there is, in a sense, a contradiction in Buddhist terminology itself, due to the fact that we use contradictory modes of expression: that is to say, modes of expression in terms of space, modes of expression in terms of time. In the case of the *asamskrta*, we have as it were a Transcendental entity, but in the case of the Spiral, the upper end of the Spiral Path,

we have got a Transcendental series. We have somehow to bring those two together within a common framework. But 'framework' is spatial terminology, so you need to well, you can't even say 'bring them together', because if you say 'bring them together', that's spatial! Do you see what I mean? It's as though one mode of terminology has to give in, in the end, to the other, and one becomes predominant.

Vessantara: I suppose I am suggesting using the temporal more, because that at least gives the idea of further stages of development, whereas the spatial tends to [mean] you're just reaching out to something there, and in a way it is more subtle than that.

S.: But then the question arises, if you use this temporal language, don't you ever get beyond time? So the point at which you go beyond time 'beyond' time! it's as though, then, the spatial language starts creeping in.

Vessantara: Yes. One comes

S.: So when you come to the end of time, so to speak, and enter into the timeless, you cannot but conceive of the timeless on the analogy of space. So it is as though you have to make use of both; you can't really bring them together properly, it would seem, in a single conceptual model. Perhaps you can do that only as it were imaginatively, in terms of images. Dewdrop slipping into the shining sea and all that.

Prasannasiddhi: If the links are both continuous and discontinuous, but there is a qualitative difference, would that actually be experienced? If you entered, in a sense you would just ... another link, but would you actually know that you had entered a new dimension, as it were?

S.: Yes and no. You would know experientially, you would know in terms of your experience; but if you hadn't, say, studied Buddhist scriptures, you hadn't studied [255] Buddhist philosophy, you might not be able to categorize your experience in that particular traditional way. But you would have the experience of whatever it was that the categorization referred to. In other words, you could have an experience without knowing the traditional terms for that experience. But, if you have had that experience and you start describing it in your own words, as it were, someone who is familiar with the traditional language can recognize what it is in traditional terms you are talking about.

[256]

Prasannasiddhi: I suppose it was because, in a sense, the thing about entering the Unconditioned realm was that you wouldn't regress, it wasn't cyclic, so in a sense you wouldn't really know that you weren't going to regress.

S.: But the language of non-regression is as it were a particular conceptual way of looking at that experience; because you could say that, in a manner of speaking, there is no way of knowing that you are not going to regress. Because you might think, well, I haven't regressed so far but I might regress in the future. But, again, it isn't as simple as that, because if you looked into your own experience you would see quite definitely that certain factors which would have made for regression or the possibility of regression are in fact no longer there; so you know, inasmuch as those factors are no longer present, that regression in fact cannot any longer take place. But you would see all that, but you might not have the appropriate Buddhist terms to describe it all.

Chairman: Right, we have eight questions left, and they are all roughly on the same topic meditation that has arisen from this chapter. In some groups there seemed to be difficulty in coming to terms with the two pages 80 and 81, so I think some questions will be going into these two pages. The first one was from Pavel, on terms ...

Pavel: Gampopa says that each dhyana starts with a preliminary stage called T samantaka, and then it moves towards absorption or samadhi. It seems that the special samantaka with which the meditation starts is called anagamya.

S.: Where are we looking at now? Ah, here we are, yes, right.

Pavel: Is it common in Buddhist tradition, or ?

S.: Here Gampopa is probably following the Sarvastivadin tradition. There is a certain amount of obscurity here. Near the top of the page, the text reads: 'The causes (samapatti-dhyana) consist of eight preliminary stages..., eight types of dhyana and the modification of the first type of dhyana (dhyanantara).' I think what the text isn't clear, whether because the original isn't clear or is too condensed or because of the translation but what Gampopa seems to be getting at is this: that, in the first place, each preceding dhyana provides the basis for the succeeding one, and in that sense the preceding dhyana is the preliminary stage of the succeeding one. And in that way, all eight dhyanas, one might say, are preliminary stages; in that way, you get eight preliminary stages. Do you see what I mean? Except that, in the case of the first dhyana, its preceding stage is not itself a dhyana; it can't be, by definition. Though we are not given any detailed information as to what it actually is, but I suppose one could say that it is the neighbourhood concentration, or is the state of detachment from the nivaranas. Because the way that one progresses through the dhyanas is by successively detaching oneself from the dhyanas as they arise; is by detaching oneself from the previous dhyana and taking up, as it were, an objective attitude towards it, that one passes or is enabled to pass into the succeeding dhyana. It seems to be that sort of process that these paragraphs are talking about.

Pavel: [Perhaps there is a] mistake there, because it says the second discursive dhyana...

S.: The discursive dhyana is, presumably, the first dhyana, in which there is vitarka and vicara. Sometimes, of course, that is subdivided, so that you get five. That could be a possible explanation; sometimes the first dhyana is subdivided into two dhyanas, so you get altogether nine. In that case, you could say that the first of those nine dhyanas was the preliminary stage of the second of those nine; in that way, you would get eight preliminary stages.

Vessantara: I don't know how far we want to go into this, but he does definitely say 'the eight types of dhyana' in the first paragraph, which suggests that he is not thinking in terms of nine. But by dhyanantara he seems to imply that you it's as if what in the Abhidharma classification would be the first two dhyanas he seems to telescope into a first dhyana which he then modifies by the dropping of vitarka, and that modification he seems to call dhyanantara. Does that make sense, or is that ?

S.: One could look at it in that way. Yes, if one looked at it in that way, the unmodified, let us say, dhyanas the previous dhyana, as I have called it would be the dhyana as a preliminary stage; and the dhyana as modified would be the dhyana as dhyanantara, as modification. So

there is the modified and there is the modification.

Vessantara: Could we look at the third paragraph on that page in relation to that? It says: 'By concentrating attentively on that aspect or modification of the first dhyana which is free from deliberation' in the previous paragraph he has translated vitarka as deliberation 'we become Mahabrahma. We become a ... god of the second dhyana, by doing the same' I am not sure what that refers to 'on the path of the preliminary stage of the second discursive dhyana'. I was just wondering

S.: Again, if you speak of a second discursive dhyana, you seem to suggest a first discursive dhyana, and that would suggest a dividing of what is usually called the first dhyana into two dhyanas; as is in fact sometimes done.

Vessantara: I still can't ... that makes sense.

S.: Well, we've got perhaps several factors to take into consideration. Gampopa seems to be following Sarvastivadin tradition, Sarvastivadin analysis of the dhyana experiences. Presumably he is relying on the Tibetan translation. He may or he may not have understood that, let us say. Guenther is translating Gampopa; he is presumably translating without himself having had, probably, any meditative experience, so he is in a way translating blind. So we get that in English, and we try to make sense of it, partly on the basis of our knowledge of the tradition and partly on the basis of our own experience. So we can produce some sort of sense, but that sense may coincide with what appears to be the meaning of Guenther's translation of this particular passage. But we are aware of the general process, where you pass from one level of dhyana to another; you pass to the higher by distancing yourself from the lower, by lessening your attachment to it; and, of course, the higher the dhyana you achieve, the higher the world in which you find yourself or in which eventually you are reborn. The general pattern is perfectly clear. The Sarvastivadins, in this particular matter, in respect of the ..., did go into some very detailed analysis indeed. It could be that even Gampopa has not quite followed, especially as he no doubt was relying on Tibetan translations of Sanskrit texts quite scholastic texts, which may have been made even by people who themselves did not fully grasp the implications of what they were translating. There is always the possibility of [257] that sort of difficulty. It is interesting that Guenther, who often does offer explanations, doesn't have much to say by way of explanation of these passages, where some explanation would really seem to be needed. It could be that he has translated the Tibetan text as best he can, makes some sort of sense linguistically in English, but whether he has really communicated the meaning of the Tibetan text is another matter. I think sometimes one will find that, in the case of rather scholastic passages, especially perhaps involved with meditation, [they are] translated with reference to the words and not relating those words to any personal meditative experience.

Vessantara: There is more of the same on the next page... There is a short paragraph: 'What sort of way, you may ask, is detached from this and that? It is a mind-born path on a low level because it leads to, but is not yet, desirelessness.'

S.: Where is this?

Vessantara: About six lines on p.81. That, we assume, means that he is saying that 'detached from this and that' here means a detachment which falls short of Insight.

S.: Yes, on the previous page: 'Infinity of Space ... is realized by detachment from the four dhyanas' that is straightforward 'and by attentive concentration on it we become a god of the Sphere of Infinity of Space. Detachment from this leads to Infinity of Consciousness... The two further Spheres which follow and in which we can also become gods are those of ordinary Nothingness ... and Neither Sensation nor Non-Sensation'. So 'What sort of way, you may ask, is detached from this and that? It is a mind-born path on a low level because it leads to, but is not yet, desirelessness.' This isn't really very clear, is it? 'Mind-born path' what exactly is a mind-born path? What is that 'low level'? I am afraid it isn't completely clear. But, again, the general principle, as we know from other Buddhist sources, is clear: that there are these arupa-dhyanas and you progress from the one to the other by a process of successive detachment and distancing of yourself from the preceding one.

Vessantara: And, finally, the paragraph after that. I'm sorry to drag you through these, but if we did study on them somebody is going to ask us, and see if you could help us with it. If you further ask whether the Sphere of Infinity of Space is so called because it has as its frame of reference the space perceived, the answer is No.' I don't follow

S.: No, 'the first three Infinities have received their respective names through an act of deliberation at the time of their realization..., but later when this realization has been overcome there is no thought with which to make a judgement.' That is reasonably clear. 'If you further ask whether the Sphere of Infinity of Space is so called because it has as its frame of reference the space perceived' it is not that, when you have experience of the infinity of space, you as it were say to yourself 'This is the experience of the infinity of space. There is space.' Because, in that experience, there is no discursive mental activity, so it is not that in the experience itself you experience literally space and recognize it as such, but before entering into the experience you think of the experience in those terms; but when you actually enter upon the experience those terms no longer obtain. So presumably, though the text doesn't say this, when you emerge from the experience, you return to the terms which you dropped when you entered into it, and you continue to refer to the experience in that way; but speaking of it in that way is not to be taken literally.

[258]

Vessantara: So when he talks of 'an act of deliberation at the time of their realization', he must mean either before or after the realization?

S.: Yes; before entering, in this case. Because you have as it were an idea of what it is you are going to enter into. The same even with Enlightenment: you have got an idea, 'Yes, I am going to enter into Enlightenment', but, supposing you do actually enter into Enlightenment, well, you drop the notion of Enlightenment. The Enlightenment that you experience doesn't have anything, in a sense, to do with the notion of Enlightenment that you had before actually becoming Enlightened; though actually that notion of Enlightenment, though in a sense not justified, has provided you with a springboard for the actual experience of what you used to call, and in fact have to call when you emerge from the experience, Enlightenment. So it seems to be much the same with this experience of the Sphere of Infinity of Space, and presumably with the other infinities, too. In other words, it simply means that one is not to take the names for these experiences as too literally describing what actually is experienced in them. This is what it means in a general sense.

Dharmadhara: In the same paragraph, what does he mean by 'when this realization has been

overcome'? realization being the experience?

S.: I think 'realization' here means the cognitive understanding or thinking in cognitive terms of the experience of the infinity of space, as experience of the infinity of space in a sort of literal manner. The word 'realization' here, I think, is a bit misleading.

Dhammarati: Bhante, ... distinction he is making, then, between the first three and the fourth in this paragraph?

S.: The fourth, in a sense, is rather special, because, as he says, there is 'Neither Sensation nor Non-Sensation', which he explains somewhere I think it was here?

Vessantara: The next paragraph, he goes on to talk about it.

S.: which is not that there is literally no sensation, but that the sensation or perception is so subtle it can hardly be perceived. So it is a state in which there is barely distinction between subject and object. So this differentiates it from the preceding three experiences. On the other hand, there would seem, logically speaking, no reason why you shouldn't apply the same mode of thinking to that fourth; you think of it beforehand as the state in which there is neither perception nor non-perception. But perhaps eventually people will just have to consult their own experience! Gampopa seems simply to be following tradition, to be following traditional explanations deriving from the Sarvastivadin school.

Chairman: Has that cleared up your points, Vessantara? (?)

Vessantara: As clear as we're going to get it.

Gerry: I was just going to ask: why couldn't you continue the fourth arupa dhyana to such an extent that there is no distinction between subject and object?

S.: Well, however far you go in space, you never go beyond space. You need to rise to a new level altogether. The mundane, however refined, is still the mundane. You have to make the transition to the Transcendental. Which, again, according to the Sarvastivada, is done in two ways: one, by actively reflecting on the nature of Ultimate Reality, in other words coming right down to, in a sense, the upacara(?) samadhi; or, [two,] simply exhausting all your klesas, just starving them out.

Prasannasiddhi: How would that be achieved? (Laughter.)

[259]

S.: This is something not easy to explain, but it is generally understood, I think even in the Theravada as well as in the Sarvastivada, that it is the klesas which keep you going in the samsara, and you have started breaking them as you start breaking the fetters. So it is possible to gain the Transcendental simply by exhausting the klesas rather than by developing a sort of series of cognitions amounting to Insight with regard to the if we use that term the Unconditioned. Tradition seems to admit of those two possibilities, though the first one, exhausting the klesas, doesn't seem to enter very much into any sort of practical scheme of things. Attainment of Enlightenment is almost always explained in terms of the development of Insight. One, I believe, is called pati(?)samkhyanirodha and the other

apati-samkhyanirodha.

Vessantara: What does pati-samkhyā mean?

S.: Pati-samkhyā it means something like, very roughly, reckoning; but in the sense of thinking, in the sense of Insight.

Prasannasiddhi: Presumably, Bhante, if you did exhaust your klesas, there would be a cognitive element to the actual experience of ... resolving ...?

S.: Mm, yes, because here one is using 'cognitive' in a different sense, for a sort of Transcendental counterpart of what we call cognition. So Enlightenment is not free from cognition in that sense; that is using the term analogously, as it were.

Murray: Bhante, you suggested earlier on that Gampopa may not have got quite clear on the Sarvastivadin line of thinking. That idea also in some ways, as the text lays out (?), seems to me to slightly contradict who Gampopa is, inasmuch as he was Milarepa's foremost disciple, and his reputation for prodigious intellect and ability to organize his doctrine etc. It seems to me that that word 'case' do you think it is possible that Gampopa was not as Enlightened as the Tibetans make out he was that he is ... ?

S.: Well, again, this depends on what you mean by Enlightened; because you can be Enlightened without being a good or, let's say, a perfect scholar. Gampopa may well have been Enlightened without understanding, on the intellectual level, details of Sarvastivada scholasticism. Those he would have, as it were, to learn; but there may have been no one at that time in the tradition to explain those particular points to him. One might say that you may well be Enlightened, you may well have Insight, but your Insight does not necessarily give you access to factual information.

Murray: Does this suggest, then, that the geshe tradition of more modern times that Tibetan lamas did have quite prodigious knowledge of the Dharma that didn't exist at the time of Gampopa?

S.: I am not quite sure what the question is.

Murray: Well, does that suggest that at the time of Gampopa the Tibetan scholastic tradition of Buddhism was in a more rudimentary form?

S.: It may well have been, though I don't quite see how the question necessarily follows. It is not impossible, of course, that the scholastic tradition in Gampopa's time was in a more rudimentary condition; that is a possibility.

Murray: It just struck me that, given Gampopa's reputation and the fact that he was Milarepa's foremost disciple, I would have thought he would have been very much more thorough in writing.

[260]

S.: But then, on the other hand, the fact that he was one of Milarepa's foremost disciples really has no bearing on the matter, because Milarepa, as far as we know, had not studied the

Sarvastivadin scholasticism; so Milarepa was able to help Gampopa have his own personal spiritual experience, perhaps his own experience of Insight; but he would not necessarily have been able to unravel those knotty points of doctrine except in so far as those knotty points were based on, or relatable to, actual experience. But if it is not possible to relate those things to one's own actual experience, and if one has to fall back on actual information and there is no one to provide one with that information, no source, your Insight then by itself doesn't necessarily give you any help. I think one has as it were to distinguish the two spheres: one of Insight, and the other of factual knowledge and factual information. One can have Insight and be quite mistaken about factual matters, or even misunderstand certain points of the doctrine on a purely intellectual level, where those particular points do not relate to your own direct spiritual or Transcendental experience.

Murray: That would suggest, then, that there were areas of Transcendental experience which don't necessarily overlap. I would have thought

S.: Don't overlap with ?

Murray: Well, I would have thought that someone who had Insight and the ability to develop intellectual ideas and ..., would be able to spot faults or inconsistencies within the doctrine for example, the Sarvastivadin doctrine and make good or ... the ...s caused by the

S.: You can certainly do that on as it were a spiritual level, but you cannot as it were adjudicate the nature of the teaching on an intellectual level where that doesn't provide you with any possibility of a checkup on the spiritual level in accordance with your own experience. So, yes, one might say that there may well be an area where the doctrine, or certainly elaboration of doctrine, is not accessible to actual experience; perhaps because it has developed in a purely theoretical direction.

Dhammarati: Wouldn't someone of substantial spiritual ... have experience of the dhyanas?

S.: Yes, if what the tradition says pertains directly to experience; yes, if you have even got, say, a fragmentary or a broken tradition, you can reconstruct from your own experience, or you can even make corrections from your own experience. But if the doctrinal tradition does not have that direct relation to or bearing on experience, you may not be able to do that. You may have to find out in some other way.

Dhammarati: But isn't the confusion here about dhyana? Wouldn't you have expected Gampopa to have had some direct experience of the dhyanas?

S.: This is true; but then, on the other hand, you've got the Sarvastivadin elaboration. For instance, the fact that you have got direct experience of the dhyanas doesn't necessarily mean that you understand the meaning of a technical term relating to experience of the dhyanas. This is probably what is at issue. The meaning of the term, as a term, you would have to learn from some other source. You may be able to guess at it from your own experience, but you would not definitely know. So this is why it is generally considered that, even in the case of those with Insight, some actual study of the doctrine is desirable.

Dhammarati: It sort of raises the question of how useful a very elaborate conceptual exposition of spiritual experience is, that if somebody of substantial [261] attainment with a

good intellect can end up apparently more confused than clarified than the ...est devotional teaching... something ...

S.: I think that suggests there may have been a purely intellectual elaboration of the teaching, even the teaching about spiritual experience in this case, meditation which has actually no direct bearing on the spiritual experience itself. For instance, I have cited somewhere or other the number of Stream Entrants that were analysed by the Sarvastivada: some tens of thousands of different kinds of Stream Entrant. Well, what bearing does that have upon actually Entering the Stream? So it could be that Gampopa, though himself deeply experienced spiritually, did not have a full acquaintance on an intellectual level with the scholastic tradition. That is a possibility, without any detriment to the validity of his own experience. For instance, there is a question of terminology; terms translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan, and perhaps it wasn't always clear from the Tibetan translation what the Sanskrit term actually meant. We experience the same in the case of English; in the case of Guenther's own writings we puzzle over a certain expression in English, we can't make sense of it; and then we discover what Sanskrit term he is actually rendering, and then it all makes sense for us! But we could not have discovered what Sanskrit term he was trying to translate from our direct spiritual experience. We have to find out in some other way, actually gain the information.

Gerry: What value does this you could say over-theoreticalization of the doctrine have?

S.: It depends, I suppose, on what sort of person you are: basically, perhaps, on whether you are a faith-follower or a doctrine-follower. There are some people who do like to have it all laid out intellectually, neatly and systematically, and this does help them. They find it, very often, difficult to operate unless they can operate within at least a provisional intellectual scheme, including even scheme of the spiritual life. So we do find in Buddhism many such schemes, many such expositions of the Path, from the Visuddhi-Magga downwards, we might say. These have come into existence because a lot of people find them useful and even necessary; but not all, by any means. But it is said that if you don't find them useful or necessary, if you are a faith-follower, there needs to be a lot of faith, especially faith in the teacher; because that is what sustains you, and not your general intellectual understanding of the path that you are following. So you have to be careful you don't fall between two stools. If you don't want to be a doctrine-follower, well, definitely be a faith-follower; be definitely one or the other; or else a kayasaksi(?), that is the third possibility, the body witness, that is to say the yogi who relies very much on his own personal experience of meditation and so on.

Tape 25, Side 1

Wayne: Bhante, something about exhausting the klesas. In what manner could you exhaust them? Is there anything in the scriptures that talks about techniques, like the Insight techniques what do you use to exhaust the klesas? In what manner do you go about doing it?

S.: Well, for instance you could be extremely mindful, and you guard the doors of the senses, and you make quite sure that in dependence, say, on sense experience no unskilful mental state arises. You don't give any sustenance to those unskilful mental states. You keep very careful guard in that way. But not very much is said about this as a definite systematic path, though the possibility is definitely mentioned. Usually it is ethics leading to meditation leading to wisdom.

Chairman: Now we have another question on dhyana from Wayne.

[262]

Wayne: Bhante, is there a qualitative difference in the experience of dhyanas if you have entered the dhyanic states through different meditation practices say, through the Mindfulness of Breathing or through the metta bhavana?

S.: In principle not, because dhyana is dhyana. Nonetheless, I would personally say and I don't know that tradition says anything about this that I think that, in practice, the dhyana experience must as it were be suffused by a sort of carry over from the actual method by means of which you have approached it. I would say that is inevitable. In a sense, there is no such thing as a pure, abstract dhyana which you enter independently of the type of practice or method by means of which you entered it. But I can't say that that is the point of view of tradition; that is what seems reasonable to me. I don't know whether tradition has discussed this.

Chairman: Prasannasiddhi has a question on dhyana.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, can one enter the first dhyana through or while reading a novel or reading poetry?

S.: In some ways the question answers itself; because it depends on the novel, it depends on the poem. It may be one that arouses skilful or it may be one that arouses unskilful mental states. But I would say that it certainly is possible to enter on a dhyanic type of state, possibly amounting to the first dhyana well, of course, there is vitarka vicara, initial and sustained mental activity while you are reading. I would say that is more likely to occur if you are reading a scripture, a Buddhist text, which inspires you in a deeply concentrated mood, with strong positive emotions. But I wouldn't rule out the possibility of your approaching that sort of state while reading a poem or even a novel; but it would depend very much on the kind of poem or the kind of novel, or the kind of mental states that your reading of it gave rise to. I think that you were simply concentrated and absorbed in the poem or the novel wouldn't be enough; it would depend also on the nature of what it was that you were absorbed in. It might be a pornographic novel; then you'd be absorbed, but not in a skilful way, so that it couldn't amount to an experience of first dhyana.

Prasannasiddhi: In a way, I was just trying to get at the nature of the vitarka and the vicara. Some people say that it has to be connected with the breath; it can't be connected with more discursive arguings(?).

S.: Well, it can be connected with the breath; but not necessarily so. It may even be that when you have a very refined object like the breath, the dhyana itself is correspondingly more refined. But I certainly would not rule out someone attaining a state perhaps not very far short of first dhyana in the full sense through study, certainly certainly through Dharma study and possibly in these other ways, too. One can become very absorbed, the experience can be very intense; I don't know with what degree of intensity people do read do, say, experience poetry but one can experience very intensely indeed. Or one might say there are perhaps intermediate forms. Supposing you read a Buddhist text; all right, supposing it's in poetry, or a text like that; clearly some kinds of poetry could lift you to that sort of level. And then, does it have even to be ostensibly Buddhist? You could raise that point, too. There are poems by

non-Buddhist poets which dwell, say, on impermanence in a highly positive and skilful way, one might say. But one isn't necessarily concerned even with any cognitive content in that way, because dhyana as such is not concerned with Insight, but only with concentration and very intense positive emotion; and, certainly, through the reading of literature whether Buddhist or otherwise you can, depending on the nature of the literature, have that experience of intense concentration, and also of very intense emotional positivity. Perhaps you [need to] [263] become accustomed to making that sort of use of literature or poetry; perhaps you need to learn to do that. I talked some evenings ago, didn't I, in connection with falling in love, about making use of intense lyric poetry to heighten one's experience. So I think, if one used poetry, used literature, in that way, you could very likely certainly with the help of Buddhist literature lift yourself to a state amounting to that of first dhyana. One can only try; one can only experiment. No need to take it just from me one way or the other; just try; see whether in your case it happens or doesn't happen.

Dhammarati: What about the idea about dhyana involving a shift from sense experience to mental experience?

S.: It does involve a shift, but tradition says that it is only in the fourth dhyana that sense experience that is to say, experience of the five physical senses is entirely in abeyance. Short of the fourth dhyana, you do continue to function in that way, you are aware of the external world. So your eyes may be closed, but you aren't actually seeing, you are seeing the inside of your eyelids, you are still hearing; but your attention is greatly withdrawn.

Dhammarati: In, for instance, the perception that gave birth to the poem in the first place let's say when you are reading Keats' Ode to a Nightingale that poem can perhaps induce dhyana in you, it is written in a very intense sense experience which is not at all literal, and in the case of the poet, in a way, it is an enhancement of sense experience. How does this tie up with the idea of ?

S.: I am not sure about that at all. I wouldn't say that, say, Keats' experience of the nightingale, assuming he did actually hear a nightingale literally, which I believe actually was the case, that was just a sense experience. Because the fact that he wrote a poem about the nightingale meant, I would have thought, that the nightingale was much more than a nightingale; that the nightingale became, for want of a better term, a symbol. And it was because he apprehended the nightingale in that way that his experience of the nightingale, so to speak, was an extremely intense one; so intense that it produced the poem.

Dhammarati: But it also involved the sense experience of a nightingale, there was an element of sense experience.

S.: Oh, yes, but that provided the starting point. Because, yes, let us say there was an actual nightingale there, there was a little bird and he heard the song; but that has all sorts of other associations for Keats. And on that account he has a very intense experience. It is not just an ornithological experience, so to speak.

Dhammarati: What about art, for instance Turner's landscape painting? There is a very intense experience without the same degree of conceptual associations, but still it seems a very intense ... positive emotional response to sense experience.

S.: Well, what is it that makes Turner Turner? What is it that makes a painting of a landscape by Turner different from, say, a colour photograph? Clearly, there is something which Turner sees, so to speak, in the landscape which he manages to communicate. There is colour; there is just a certain way of looking at the landscape, not perhaps in a very obvious way; a certain way of seeing it so that it is made, so to speak, to mean something, almost. Perhaps one sees this most of all in some of the Zen landscapes, where the artist has succeeded in communicating his vision. One could even say he sees the blade of grass or the bamboo as it really is, or at least in greater depth, in a way that a lesser artist does not see. He succeeds in communicating something of that.

[264]

Dhammarati: Is there a withdrawal from sense experience in a case of that kind? S.: But this also raises the question, what does one mean by withdrawal? The sense object is there; you mirror it. You could say there is no unskilful mental state arising in connection with it. So it is, one could say, a pure sense experience. Nonetheless, there is sense experience there, and that provides the starting point, it provides in a way the medium of communication for the artist. But if you were to go deeper than that if, say, you were to get into fourth dhyana you would no longer experience that particular sense object. And, in a sense, you would have gone beyond art, you might say. But it does seem that quite a degree of spiritual experience, including Insight experience, is compatible with sense experience. There is nothing wrong with sense experience; it is the unskilful mental states that arise in connection with it that as it were contaminate the sense experience. But the sense experience itself the fact that the eye sees a visual object, or the ear hears an auditory object is not in the least unskilful or unspiritual. That is pure manoniyama; that is, so to speak, karmically and ethically quite neutral. So the senses are quite innocent in themselves. They are merely perceptive mechanisms. So sense experience is incompatible with a very high level of dhyana experience; it is not incompatible with a lower level of dhyana experience, and it is not incompatible with Insight. When you have Insight, you don't cease to see things and hear things; you carry on seeing and hearing, in a sense, exactly as before, but you see them in a different way, or with a different attitude.

Prasannasiddhi: Does this correspond with the view of the kasina objects that one ... ?

S.: In a sense, yes, because in the case of a kasina you've got a disc of colour or a disc of light and you just allow yourself to become absorbed in that. And it's that which leads you to the experience of the dhyanas. So you have a pure sense experience without any, in a sense, reaction; without any, certainly any unskilful, mental state arising in connection with it. You are able to become absorbed in it because colour is of that nature; it draws the attention. There is nothing to think about. You just experience, you just perceive the colour. So in that way you can become very absorbed, very concentrated, and from the kasina progress to dhyana-like experience, or dhyana experience. How are we getting on? We really ought to stop, I think, pretty soon.

Chairman: There are four questions left.

S.: All related?

Chairman: Yes, all related.

S.: Let's just have one more.

Chairman: One more. We follow on with Prakasha's question on subtle thought.

Prakasha: The text refers to an 'act of deliberation' in the first three of the formless dhyanas. In what sense is there subtle conceptual thought in the higher dhyanas?

S.: This raises, of course, the whole question of the general nature of these arupa dhyanas. They are a very mysterious body of experiences. Yogis don't have very much to say about them, it seems, not in modern times, and scholars also don't really know what to make of them. Perhaps it is one of those aspects of Buddhism that need re-evaluation. I have made one or two hints or suggestions in the past. Gampopa, perhaps, in a sense whether following Sarvastivada tradition or not - [265] seems to think that there is something that requires explanation, because he mentions this fact that the sphere of infinite space is called the sphere of infinite space, but at the same time he makes it clear that that is only the way in which we think of it prior to entering upon it; so one might say, in a sense, what is it? Or one might even say, from what level does one enter upon it? Does one enter upon it as it were from the first dhyana? Does one, for instance, in the first dhyana, think: 'I will enter upon the sphere of infinity of space,' and then proceed through the other rupa dhyanas and only then enter that particular arupa dhyana? Is that what happens? It isn't clear. One can only try to consult, eventually, one's own experience and see what happens. Again, while we are on the subject, one has not only the analytical psychological accounts of the dhyanas, but one also has the Buddha's similes. Personally, I am inclined to pay more attention to the similes, in the sense of perhaps regarding the similes as being more representative of what actually happens than the psychological analysis. One can only try to see and make connections in one's own experience. For instance, in the case of the second dhyana, do you actually have, after a time, an experience of something rather like a spring, a subterranean spring, arising in the depth of your being? Is this what you experience, or not? Or one might ask, is that a standard experience? It would seem to be, judging from the fact that the Buddha uses that as a simile for that dhyana. Or can one have a sort of approximation to that? Can one experience it in a different way for instance, the arousing of the kundalini, or something of that kind? So I think one has to be quite careful relating what one actually experiences oneself in the course of meditation to what one reads in Buddhist texts, canonical and otherwise. Sometimes it will require quite a bit of thought and reflection before one sees the way in which things actually square, the way in which they hang together. Also one must not forget that the analysis of the different dhyanas into their constituent psychological factors is not complete. It is not that the dhyanas contain only those particular mental factors. One has to get the whole picture, and one can do that best, no doubt, by consulting the appropriate Abhidharma analysis. For instance, in the case of a dhyana, you will have all the mental factors which are present in all states of consciousness anyway, and then all those which are present in all skilful states of consciousness, and then those which are present only in that particular dhyana. One has to take the whole picture into consideration, all the different factors, and then try to evaluate them and perhaps translate them in terms of the corresponding simile that the Buddha gives; and then compare with one's own experience: whether, as your experience of meditation deepens, you do in fact experience things in that way. Anyway, perhaps that's a good note to end on.

Voices: Thank you.

[266]

Tape 26, Side 1

Chairman: Tonight we come to the rest of the questions from ch.6, and the ... questions that we have on ch.7, 'Benevolence and Compassion'.

S.: How many questions do we have altogether?

Chairman: In all, we have seven questions. The first of the leftover questions comes from Barry, on the maximum effect of minimum cause.

Barry: Bhante, you answered a question last week about the Tibetans exaggerating the karmic results of evil deeds, and I think you suggested that this was perhaps for reasons of social control and maybe even out of sadism. In the text at the bottom of p.82 and the top of p.83, there are two quotations from the Udanavarga which go, first:

The doing of even a little evil deed
Becomes in the next world a terrifying and noise-making misery,
just like poison that has entered the marrow.

Secondly:

Even little merits done attract great happiness in the next world. They become great benefactors just like the ripening of excellent grain.

It seems from these quotes that the Indians also exaggerated the results of karma, but positively as well as negatively. Why do you think the Indians exaggerated in this way?

S.: The Indians seem to have been and even now seem to be constitutionally prone to exaggeration. One can only say that. One encounters it in all sorts of small ways: for instance, I either heard or read fairly recently a little incident in which someone, one of our Friends in India, gave a talk and afterwards inquired of someone who had been there how many people he thought had been present; and this person said, 'About 4 million'! It seems incredible. I thought, even supposing there was a misunderstanding on the part of our Friend supposing that person did not actually say 4 million, suppose he said 4 lakhs even that is 400,000; and there probably were only a few hundred people present. But it does seem that Indians are, as I have said, constitutionally prone to exaggeration. I can only explain it in those terms. But you quite rightly mention the quotation from the Udanavarga. The Udanavarga is, of course, very roughly the Tibetan equivalent of the Dhammapada. It is a translation of what originally was a Sanskrit text, and that Sanskrit text contains many verses which are in the Dhammapada. But it is interesting that the Pali Dhammapada contains verses which are not quite in accordance with the spirit of this particular verse: for instance, there is Pali verse which goes something like this:

Just as a jar is filled with water by the constant falling of drops,

so little by little a man fills himself with good.

Similarly:

Just as the smith removes the impurities from the silver,

so little by little a man purifies himself.

So you don't get the impression of a small cause followed by a tremendous effect, [267] but you get the impression of a number of small causes followed by an appropriate effect. Do you see what I mean? It does seem to be, in a way, rather more rational. So it is not that we don't find, in the Indian Buddhist literature certainly in that literature which seems to be close to the Buddha himself a comparatively as it were sober approach; but I think that Indian tendency to exaggerate very quickly took over. I think we have to discount it to some extent.

Barry: It would say something about the level of spiritual development of the people writing it that they did exaggerate in this way.

S.: I think perhaps one can see exaggeration as an idiom; as a mode. It doesn't, I think, necessarily tell us anything about the spiritual state of the people using that idiom. I think also we must recognize that there are contexts in which what might at first sight seem to be an exaggeration is wholly appropriate, because in some of the Mahayana texts all sorts of astronomical distances are mentioned, and it would seem, from what we know of modern astronomy, that there was no trace of exaggeration there, because the distances involved are actually vast, vaster than people certainly thought in the West until very recent times. So you could also say the Indians tended to think on a big scale. But sometimes they did simply exaggerate, and I think we have to make due allowance for that. And the Tibetans, of course, following the Indians and perhaps even in some cases trying to outdo them.

Chairman: The next question comes from Dharmadhara.

Dharmadhara: This refers to the previous chapter, about the gods of the kamaloka rather than the gods of the rupaloka and arupaloka. In the text it says that the gods of the kamaloka are constantly experiencing 'the misery of quarrelling with the Asuras, are humiliated, killed, violated, slaughtered and banished.' So it sounds like they are having a pretty unpleasant time. Now the gods of the rupa dhyana and arupa dhyana correspond to levels of meditational experience. Is there a corresponding meditation experience for the gods of the kamaloka, and if so what do they represent?

S.: If there is a level to which they do correspond, presumably it is the level of the upadhara samadhi or neighbourhood concentration. It is a level, or if you like a world, slightly more subtle than that of the human world. Sometimes I have thought that the devaloka realms of the kamaloka could be regarded as corresponding to artistic consciousness, because two of these realms are called respectively the realm of the gods that enjoy their own creations nimana or nirmana is the word used and the realm of those gods that enjoy the creations of others. The only difficulty is that the second is placed higher than the first, and one might have thought, had they represented the artistic consciousness, that it would have been the other way around. But that is at least interesting. They certainly represent somewhat more refined levels of consciousness, but not so refined as those which one finds on the dhyana levels; they represent something intermediate between ordinary human consciousness and the consciousness of the gods of the rupa and arupalokas. So perhaps they do represent or correspond to the artists. But I must say that at present that remains really no more than a speculation of mine or a hypothesis, so please don't write it down and quote it as gospel. It

may actually turn out to be the case that one can look at it in that way, but I am not completely confident for the present that one can in fact do that.

Prasannasiddhi: Do you know, Bhante, of any good sources for information on the gods of the different realms?

S.: I am afraid I don't. I have been trying to collect some of those sources. Information is very scattered. One can get it from different Pali and Sanskrit [268] texts, different sutras; one can also look up articles in The Buddhist Encyclopedia and get some information there. But there doesn't seem to be no Western scholar seems to have taken great interest in the realms of the gods; they usually just dismiss it as so much mythology and don't bother their heads about it any more. So I have been trying to collect together information; I have a few notes taken from various sources, but at present there isn't really anything that one can refer people to, which is rather a pity. There are various charts and diagrams in certain books on the Abhidhamma, but they only give the names of the worlds and their relative positions; they don't really help very much. They don't even explain the names of the different realms or the different gods properly; even that has to be done. But I have been, as I say, collecting information, in a sense, over the years; I hope to be able to say something about these matters in due course.

Prasannasiddhi: There are no Divine Comedies in Pali and Sanskrit?

S.: I am afraid not.

Dharmadhara: Do you see the meditational experience on one side and the devas on the other as being two traditions coming together, being combined?

S.: I can't say that I do, no; I see it as definitely belonging together, perhaps from the beginning. I don't see them as two separate traditions which have as it were at a later date been artificially combined; no, I don't see them in that way at all. I think, from the very beginning, the two represented, so to speak, simply the two different sides, the two different aspects, of the coin, if you like, of one's total spiritual experience. I think from the very beginning Buddhism, that is to say the Buddha, spoke in terms of realms or worlds as well as in terms of states or levels of consciousness. Some of Mrs Rhys Davids' writings make this point quite clear.

Chairman: The next question comes from Prakasha on the formless dhyanas and the Transcendental.

Prakasha: There are two parts to this question.

(1) Are the four arupa dhyanas four higher and progressive stages beyond the rupa dhyanas, or are they rather four dimensions of the fourth dhyana?

(2) Do the higher dhyanas shade into the Transcendental?

S.: (chuckles) What is this shading in? There are all sorts of things that could be said about the four arupa dhyanas. I have said some of those things on former occasions. But let us just stick to the actual questions. Could we have the first one again, please?

Prakasha (repeats it).

S.: In a sense, they are both. They are usually presented in traditional Buddhism as forming as it were a continuous series with the four rupa dhyanas. At the same time, it is made clear, especially, I think, in the Abhidhamma, that in a manner of speaking the four arupa dhyanas are so many variations, one might say, of the fourth rupa dhyana, in which one has, in terms of the customary analysis, only samadhi, citta ekagata, and upekkha as the special characteristics of that state. And in the same way, concentration citta, one-pointedness of mind and equanimity are the special features of the four arupa dhyanas. So, in that sense, they are variations of the fourth rupa dhyana or explorations of its different dimensions. But whether they shade into the Transcendental this is the second question - can [269] anything shade into the Transcendental? Is, in a way in principle, anything mundane any nearer to the Transcendental than any other mundane thing? In other words, are you really any nearer to the Transcendental whether you are in the first dhyana, the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, or in no dhyana at all? Because the mundane is the mundane. So, in the strict sense if you like, in the ultimate sense you don't get any nearer. You become more refined, you become less mundane, but you don't become more Transcendental! This is looking at it at least from one point of view. So I don't think really one can speak of any sort of shading off, in the strict sense, of the arupa dhyanas into the Transcendental. But the whole nature, the whole position, in the total scheme of Buddhist spiritual life, of the arupa dhyanas, is quite strange, quite mysterious, and it is one of those things that I have promised myself I will go into some time. I have been looking into various Pali and Sanskrit texts with this in mind for some time, without coming to any very definite conclusions; except that we can say that, in early Buddhism, in what seems to be the Buddha's teaching, one has, it would seem, originally, a set only of four rupa dhyanas, to which the set of four arupa dhyanas seems to have been added subsequently. But even about that we can't be completely sure.

Prakasha: Does one necessarily have to come down to the first dhyana to take up the object of Insight, or could Insight arise from the fourth dhyana without that basis?

S.: I suppose it depends what you mean exactly by 'from'; because, to the extent that intellection is necessary for the development of Insight, to that extent one would not be able to develop it literally in one of the arupa dhyanas. Dhammarati: Going back to this point whether the mundane can shade into the Transcendental, if you looked at it from the point of view of the states of mind that were operating, it seems to me that you have a tendency to experience the four formless dhyanas in terms of subject and object; it is becoming less and less pronounced. And if you move generally to states of more and more awareness, as you move from cyclical conditioning to more and more spiral conditioning, could you not see that in a sense as a move away from the mundane towards this whole idea of progressive, open-ended Spiral conditioning?

S.: Only in a manner of speaking. I was speaking from, in a sense, a strictly logical point of view. For instance, supposing something, some world, is infinitely far away. If you go, say, a billion miles in the direction of that thing which is infinitely far away, are you actually any nearer to it? This is the sort of thing I was thinking in terms of. That was the sort of point of view I was adopting.

Dhammarati: Does that ...ly correspond to the experience I hesitate to say 'the facts'?

S.: Well, again, it depends upon the point of view that you adopt. If you adopt a point of view in connection with which you use the terminology, say, of the conditioned and the Unconditioned, the mundane and the Transcendental, as many Buddhist texts do, you cannot therefore think in terms of getting any nearer to the Transcendental by simply refining the mundane. In practical terms, practically speaking, yes, you are, you may say, nearer; but not in the absolute sense, not in the ultimate sense, not logically.

Dhammarati: Is that because the logical categories are more rigid in the nature of their relationship ... ?

S.: Well, if you say 'the nature of the relationship' well, relationship implies relationship between certain things, so you have already as it were posited, say, two things, say the mundane and the Transcendental; so if you posit them and if [270] you define them in the way that they are usually defined, you can't get any nearer to the one by the refinement of the other. I certainly see what you are getting at, and if you think too rigidly in terms of a mundane and a Transcendental though much of Buddhism does that certain logical difficulties do arise. In fact, you can't explain how you become Enlightened. But, one might say, can you explain how you become Enlightened? How can you explain how you actually cover that distance between yourself and infinity? Perhaps you can't offer a logical explanation of it; it ought to be impossible, but actually it isn't. Logically it is, but in practice it isn't. Perhaps it is better and safer to go back to the familiar, well-worn terminology of 'in dependence upon A, B arises'.

Mike: Going back to this business of whether or not you gain Insight from the higher dhyanas, inasmuch as strictly speaking you need the cognitive mental faculty in order to attain Insight, it occurred to me that wouldn't that be more of a secondary phenomenon? If Insight transcends subject-object duality, it would also transcend the dichotomy between emotion and intellect, and as a consequence you would just have one experience which could occur from any dhyana, and then the process of coming back down through the dhyanas, as the effect of the experience wears off, the mental cognitive faculty would almost automatically understand what was going on, which would complete the process.

S.: I am not sure what the question is.

Mike: It seemed to me you were saying that you can't attain the Transcendental from the higher dhyanas, strictly speaking, because this is the cognitive faculty. Is that due to the fact that you are using a logical model?

S.: Oh no, the model is definitely psychological if one can even speak of a model. One is giving, according to Buddhist tradition, just a description of what happens, of the psychological facts, as it were. But, as I suggested a little earlier, one has to be careful not to think too literally. This is why I emphasized this word 'from'. It is not that, having explored, say, higher dhyanas and I have touched on this before you as it were abandon them completely and bonk! down you come to the first dhyana, with its cognitive processes, its intellection and so on. It isn't really like that, because there is that background, as it were, of the experience of the higher dhyanas; that, in a sense, is still with you; you don't completely lose it. But as it were against that background, while you are still, say, very still and very concentrated and very integrated, there arises a very subtle, a very delicate cognitive process, rather different from what we usually experience; and it is in dependence upon that that one

develops Insight.

Mike: So it seems that you are suggesting that there is a middle ground, where you can maintain, say, the third dhyana but also have

S.: Not quite exactly maintain it, not in its fullness, because in its fullness it is incompatible with mental activity. But perhaps what I am saying amounts to this: that one should not think of the dhyanas as being as it were too rigidly stratified. It is not quite like ascending to the different floors of a house and then descending. In fact it is not at all like that. In other words, in, so to speak, descending to a lower dhyana you don't lose everything that you gained by ascending to the higher dhyana. Nonetheless, there is some difference between being fully as it were in the higher dhyana and so to speak descending and allowing that subtle cognitive process to start up, to become the basis for one's development of Insight.

Mike: So it seems to me that you are saying that it is not possible to obtain Insight if you are fully immersed in the higher dhyanas?

[271]

S.: Right, you could probably summarize it like that; yes. But one is not therefore to think that, in order to develop Insight, you have completely to abandon those higher dhyanas. So in that sense it is, as you said a little while ago, a sort of middle ground though again you mustn't take that literally and try to draw up a more elaborate scheme of the dhyanas incorporating this middle ground as a sort of separate level or even as a series of levels.

Mike: I was just puzzling, because it seems that, as a consequence, Insight has almost an inordinate emphasis on the cognitive mental faculties; whereas one would have thought that the emphasis would be on emotion, particularly as it is stressed that ... is more emotional.

S.: Yes, that is true; because one must not forget that the language of Indian Buddhism, including Pali Buddhism, is very cognitive; is very what is the term? is not only cognitive, it is even, one might say, intellectual. That is the predominant language. So it is very easy to misunderstand that, and when one speaks of, say, Insight as arising in dependence on a certain cognitive process or on a certain intellectual understanding, one must not think in terms of that as being as it were one-sidedly cognitive, or one-sidedly intellectual. If that was in fact the case, it is very doubtful whether any Insight would arise at all. So perhaps one should not take the language of some of the Indian Buddhist texts too literally. There is an understanding, yes; but that understanding, by its very nature, almost, contains a definitely what we call emotional component.

Mike: One final query in this: would this be why, in terms of the Bodhisattva Path, the Bodhisattva is seen as having more chance of gaining Insight, say, than an Arhant? For example, you have got more chance of gaining Insight in the context of coop and Centre than, say, if you are by yourself meditating in the mountains.

S.: In terms of the FWBO, you could say that. I think those who have ever had an experience of understanding something, let us say, of a broadly philosophical nature understanding it really deeply or intensely, really going into it will know that there is a very strongly emotional element in that understanding; even a certain elation, a certain excitement. It is certainly not just dry. It is certainly not arid; it is certainly not just intellectual in an alienated way. So that

is all the more the case with understanding the Dharma. Perhaps we get a bit misled just looking through the categories of the Abhidharma and not feeling very excited about them. But, of course, there is a point that I mentioned more than once some evenings ago: that is, that one must consult one's own experience. One must concentrate as best one can and try to experience, say, first dhyana, and then try to experience a subsidence of all mental activity, all thinking; even thinking about the Dharma; and then, having dwelt in that state of no mental activity for some time, and having experienced it, then just as it were try to come back into a state of mental activity actually reflecting on the Dharma and just try to see what happens: whether you do literally depart from the earlier state, or in what sense you depart from it, or in what sense it is still with you, or to what extent it is still with you, despite the fact that the mental activity has started up again; and then try to see of what nature is that mental activity, how subtle is it? Do you see what I mean? Because it is within everybody's possibility to explore these things for themselves; maybe not with regard to the higher dhyanas, but certainly with regard to, say, the first and the second, which are the crucial ones in this respect.

Mike: Conversely, then, contemplation on aspects of the Dharma could lead into the dhyanas?

S.: Oh yes, certainly; yes. When your contemplation of a particular aspect of the Dharma, or your reflection on it, can become so intense that it becomes deeply [272] concentrated; and then, as a result of that concentration, you just stop thinking about the Dharma for the time being you are just concentrated. You could even say you are absorbed in that aspect of the Dharma without mental activity. Yes; this is a quite important aspect of the spiritual path this as it were toing and froing between reflection, contemplation of the Dharma and becoming absorbed in a dhyana state. One becomes absorbed in, say, a dhyana state without mental activity for a while; then you emerge, so to speak, from that, you allow mental activity to start up again, you turn your attention to a certain aspect of the Dharma, you try to understand that. But then, as perhaps you find your mind is wandering just a little, all right, you allow the mental activity to calm down; again you immerse yourself in that higher dhyana where there is no mental activity. You can alternate in this way, deepening your experience of the dhyana state on the one hand, and deepening your understanding of the Dharma on the other, almost indefinitely.

Mike: So it seems to me you have two aspects of that level within the context of a single meditation period or over a longer period, say a period of years. Do you think, in the latter case, it would be fair to say that the principle you have outlined is one of the one of the foundations of the Bodhisattva way of life?

S.: Not only the Bodhisattva way of life. The same principle applies to the path of the Arhant, too. The only difference is that one might say that, in the case of the path of the Arhant, the conception of Insight is possibly more limited, inasmuch as it extends, technically speaking, only to pudgalanaratmia(?) and not to dharmanaratmia. But even there the principle is the same: alternating between immersion in the dhyana state free from mental activity, and one could even say immersion in mental activity with regard to the Dharma, inasmuch as you emerge from the higher meditative state with a very concentrated mind, you are able to understand the Dharma better. And inasmuch as you have understood the Dharma better, you are able to plunge still more deeply into a meditative state, a state of concentration. So you alternate between the two whether within a shorter time limit or a longer time limit. But the overall principle is there, regardless. You can alternate between the two within the context of

a single session, that is to say a single session of seated practice, or you can alternate between the two over a period of some years, say devoting, say, a year or two just to samatha, and then a year or two to intensive study of the Dharma. Probably the latter would not be advisable; probably you need to have both within a much smaller time span. But one does have its effect on the other; the one does help, the one does benefit, the other.

Buddhadasa: I was just listening to your answer there. For some time I have felt slightly puzzled about the relationship between visualization practice, the sadhana, and entry into the dhyanas. It would seem that if one undertakes a visualization or sadhana practice which involves a high degree of mental activity in the recitation of verses, in a way one is inhibiting oneself from going further into the dhyanas, where no mental activity is required. Similarly, if one feels that one is in a dhyana where you don't want any mental activity, one is reluctant to take up the sadhana practice. I see a sort of tension between the two.

S.: In a way there is, but not really, because actually visualization practice is not inimical to the dhyanas not in itself, because you can use a visualization practice in two ways: you can use it either as a samatha practice or as a vipassana practice, or both. For instance, if you succeed in visualizing a particular Bodhisattva and simply visualizing, simply seeing, without mental activity, that can be a dhyanic experience. It is possible, as it were, to remain simply contemplating, simply regarding that visualized form, without any mental activity about it; that is to say, not as it were thinking to yourself 'How beautiful it is,' or 'I wish I could be like that one day,' or 'This means such-and-such,' or 'That means something else.' If you can remain simply 'contemplating' is [273] probably the right word that visualized form, without any such mental activity, that will certainly be tantamount to a dhyanic experience. Because there is nothing in a subtle visual experience which is incompatible with dhyana. Otherwise, in higher dhyanic states, how are you going to see the appropriate devas, as it were? So that is looking at the visualized form or the visualization practice from the samatha point of view. But if you start up a train of reflection, for instance to the effect that 'This particular visualized form arose in dependence on certain conditions, therefore it is not ultimately real, therefore it is sunyata, or if you start reflecting on the meaning of different aspects of that visualized figure, the meaning of the colour, the meaning say, in the case of Manjusri, of the sword and the book that represents mental activity; that is incompatible, in a manner of speaking, with the higher dhyanas; that is a vipassana-type experience.

Buddhadasa: But there seems to be a sort of conflict between reflecting, in a mental way, on a visualized form, and reciting the verses in a, say, automatic, habitual way.

S.: The recitation of the verses will carry you so far, but by the time you have come to the end of the appropriate number of recitations you should have succeeded in visualizing the figure, and then of course you just see the figure without the recitation; and you can then either just continue contemplating it that is to say, doing a samatha type practice or reflecting on the meaning of its various attributes that is to say, doing as it were a vipassana type practice or, as I explained earlier, you can alternate between the two. Perhaps I can make it clearer by referring to that well-known phenomenon that we talked about a little while ago, falling in love. If you refresh your memories, you might be able to recall the experience of being so entranced with someone that you are quite happy just gazing at their face without any thought, or, say, gazing at their photograph; just gazing, without any mental activity. That corresponds to the samatha type of practice with regard to the visualized image of the Bodhisattva. But then again, with regard to that same person, instead of simply looking at

them, without any thought or mental activity, you can start having thoughts about them; you can even start asking them questions. That corresponds to practising with the visualized form of the Buddha or Bodhisattva in a vipassana type way.

Buddhadasa: What has troubled me a little bit is that ... absorption in a visualized form, and just ..., without thinking, could it be OK at that point to drop the verse and mantra recitations associated with the practice?

S.: Most practices lay down a particular number of times that you are to recite, and I think usually you won't find that you reach that degree of steadiness of the image before you have completed that particular number of recitations. In fact, it may well be the other way round: you need to recite a greater number of times. I don't think there will be a practical problem here.

Tape 25, Side 2

Gerry: Bhante, what about the experience of dhyana and recitation of the mantra? Do you think it is possible to be reciting the mantra and at the same time also experiencing a dhyanic state?

S.: No. I think this will not happen. I think, as you get into a dhyanic state proper as distinct from the experience of upadhara samadhi, you will tend to want to stop the mantra recitation. I think you will start experiencing it as a distraction, as a sort of encumbrance, almost, because your mind will be wanting just to concentrate, just to become absorbed; and it is quite appropriate then to do that. But then, of course, after a while you may find that your mind is restless, it can't settle down in that state of absorption; you get wandering [274] thoughts. Well, when you get those wandering thoughts, come back to the mantra recitation and carry on with that until such time as again you just feel like being concentrated.

Gerry: Sometimes in a practice you get to a point where the recitation of the mantra ceases to be almost reciting the words, but a rhythm comes up

S.: That's true.

Gerry: Is that compatible with dhyanic experience?

S.: It is less incompatible, but even that when you start getting really absorbed is a distraction; though it is less so because it is a more subtle sort of thing. Again, one has to examine one's own experience. The main thing being if one is trying to experience the dhyanas, that you want to drop anything of a distracting nature, even if it is the recitation of the mantra in the end. But you have to be careful, because sometimes you are going to feel like stopping the recitation of the mantra not [because you are] concentrated or about to become absorbed but [because you are] just a bit bored or a bit tired. But if you are genuinely becoming more concentrated, and genuinely moving towards absorption in a dhyana state, you won't feel like continuing the mantra recitation. You might again, this is a bit different reach a state where you don't have any feeling that you are reciting the mantra; it is more as though the mantra recitation is going on and you are just attending to that. That is more compatible with a quasi-dhyanic experience; you are just intent and listening to that mantra going on. You are not conscious of yourself reciting it, or not conscious of yourself as reciting it.

Gerry: Or sometimes you see the syllables moving; but perhaps there is no attendant... you are not reciting ...

S.: If you see the syllables moving, that can be quite a concentrated experience. But again, the fact that they are moving will mean that the mind is not completely at rest, not completely concentrated or absorbed. After a while, you will perhaps even start feeling slightly irritated with that movement. You might find it slightly disturbing, though again on a quite refined, subtle level.

Dhammarati: I am just thinking, Bhante, about what you have said in ... sessions about language as metaphorical, and merely extending that to ... that sort of ... concepts are metaphorical, and that ... discursive thought is part of the experience of Insight and how far... method, and I was thinking that for instance a translation by Guenther where he talks about it as aesthetic appreciation: I was wondering if you could not have an element of absorption in a visualization practice that was both very emotionally concentrated, that almost you are starting to see meaning without any conceptual elaboration of that?

S.: In some ways, 'seeing meaning' is self-contradictory. I am not saying that you can't as it were, at least metaphorically speaking, see meaning. I think you can. I take 'to see meaning' as representing seeing, let's say, logical processes, not as processes but as happening simultaneously. I have said in the past that I myself often see things, as it were, almost in terms of charts or diagrams; so that, if you are asked a question and it is something that relates to your own experience, you have to sort of work it out from a to b and then to c, you can just look at this diagram which is sort of spread out in front of you, and you see immediately what as it were the answer is. So that is, presumably, the sort of thing you are talking about: seeing meaning. I think, even, at the same time, you do a very quick translation; I think that happens, too, because the mind does work with really inconceivable rapidity. So perhaps you don't actually 'see' meaning, you [275] see but you translate that into terms of meaning. Perhaps one could look at it in that way.

Dhammarati: In Guenther's description of vidya, that seems to be an element of Insight experience, but it is not conceptual so it doesn't involve any discursive elaboration.

S.: But again, one can come back to this question of consulting one's own experience. Perhaps one does need to take those words quite seriously and just study, from time to time, perhaps even from day to day, what is actually happening in one's own experience. There isn't really much point in saying, 'Could you do this?' or 'Could you do that?' You've got all the equipment: you can try it, you can see for yourself, and see what you do see. Try to see for yourself what the relation is between what one might call pure experience experience of a more aesthetic nature, without overt mental activity, without discursive mental activity and the discursive mental activity itself. Just where does it come in? How does it come in? What difference does it make? When you say you understand things, or understand something, exactly what elements are there, exactly what psychological factors, what is happening? And then ask oneself, is that totally incompatible with that, or aesthetic appreciation of things? Perhaps we need to have quite a few more workshops, as it were. Otherwise we are in danger of being theoretical about things we don't need to be theoretical about, and discussing the why and wherefore of certain things which we could easily settle by just immediately consulting our own experience.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, I must confess I am a bit of a heretic, because I don't generally tend to do my visualization practice, and at the moment I don't really feel particularly bothered about this. So I was wondering how important you consider visualization to be.

S.: It depends what one understands visualization to be; because when one visualizes, say, a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, one isn't simply doing a visualization exercise, as you might say visualize a round ball or something of that sort. The visualized form represents an embodiment, from a particular aspect or a particular angle, of the spiritual ideal itself, and it is that that one is trying to get in touch with, in contact with, in a very direct and tangible way. I think it is the experience of all those who have done a visualization practice that is, done a proper sadhana for any length of time that one does get, in that way, a rather different experience, one might say even a quite different experience, from what one gets just doing the Mindfulness of Breathing and the metta bhavana, good though they are. So doing the visualization practice in this sense ...s you to put yourself in contact with what you yourself are, in a manner of speaking, on a much deeper level of your being. So the significance considerably goes beyond that of the Mindfulness and the Metta, without depreciating or undervaluing them in any way.

Prasannasiddhi: I have heard you mention that you don't have to do anything special to gain Insight; you can see, you can understand, Reality just from your own experience of life. You don't actually need

S.: This is true; you can, because you can develop Insight just by dwelling on impermanence. In a sense, you don't need any special exercises because there are all sorts of examples and instances of impermanence around you all the time. The leaves are falling from the tree, and your shoes are wearing out, and you've got a few more grey hairs today than you had yesterday, and things like that. But actually we find that in practice that that isn't enough; that might be enough for very gifted Zen-like people, but we need much more specific practice and exercises; we need a much more definite, much more concrete spiritual buildup to the point where we can just look at a falling leaf and have Insight into [276] impermanence. And the visualization exercises or practices or sathanas are all part of that building-up process; in some ways, the culmination of it.

Mike: Could you please be a bit more specific about what you mean by 'a Zen-like person'?

S.: (chuckles): Well, you see, if you read Zen literature, Ch'an literature, you notice they don't go in much for imagery. They are rather bare, rather austere sort of people. This is, at least, the picture that one gets. They don't seem to enjoy all those wonderful Mahayana symbolisms and things. In some ways, they seem closer to the Theravada, to the Hinayana; one gets that impression, sometimes, with some of these Ch'an or Zen worthies. So I was thinking of something of that kind.

Mike: Do you think there is a ... quality within a person, to have that sort of appreciation? It seems to me that is implied; you can just look underneath form and see the meaning of it?

S.: If one takes a very broad view, one can say that the mundane is divided into all sorts of levels. You have got the ordinary human level, you have got the archetypal level, let's say; and beyond that you've got the Transcendental. But whether it is the human level or whether it is the archetypal level, it is all mundane, and as I said a little while ago, the highest spiritual

levels are no nearer the Transcendental than the lower ones, the more refined levels of the mundane are no nearer the Transcendental than the less refined levels. They are all equally sunyata. So, in principle, you can go straight to sunyata from anything. But in practice you can't; in practice, for most people, you need to consolidate your energies, you need to bring your energies more and more together. And that means, usually, leading them up the scale, up the hierarchy of ... experiences to more refined levels, where you can collect your energies to such an extent that you can be really concentrated and break through into the Transcendental from that higher as it were archetypal level. This seems to be the way for most people. So things like visualization practices are helpful and even necessary. But when I spoke of the Zen or Ch'an type of person, I meant someone who had as it were, almost by nature, a great capacity for concentration, or perhaps someone who had done a lot decades, even of, say, Mindfulness of Breathing, and whose energies were therefore very unified and who therefore could break through, so to speak, at almost any point of the mundane and didn't need to ascend to the archetypal levels in order to be able to do that.

Mike: It seems to me what you are implying here, then, is that the Transcendental cannot be spatially disclosed; it is outside of time. So is there, then, strictly speaking, anything that you can do to attain the Transcendental?

S.: Well, in a sense there isn't anything you can do anything you can do. Who is this 'you' that can do anything? But, on the other hand, one can't be one-sided. As the Perfection of Wisdom makes very clear in the case of the Bodhisattva Ideal, the Bodhisattva is supposed to say that 'I take a vow, I make a vow, to deliver an infinite number of sentient beings; at the same time, there are no sentient beings to deliver.' Just in the same way, you reflect: 'There is no Enlightenment to gain; at the same time, I am going to gain it.' That is the only way one can express the matter, it seems, in terms of ordinary human speech in that sort of paradoxical fashion. But it is as though the contemplation of these archetypal levels and all this wonderful symbolism is just a means of, say, concentrating our attention and involving us emotionally so that we can integrate all our energies and achieve concentration, and thereby develop Insight.

Dhammarati: Why did Zen do away with that ... symbolism ... state from the point of view of ...

[277]

S.: I am not so sure that they did away with it; because, from the very beginning, there have been different schools of thought, different traditions, different types of practice, within Buddhism itself, even in the Buddha's day. It is not as though they were acquainted with it and then did away with it, but perhaps, from the very beginning of Buddhism in China, there were some who were attracted by that particular approach. Some scholars say that Ch'an or Zen originated among a group of students of the Lankavatara Sutra; well, the Lankavatara Sutra is not famous for its imagery. You just get a little bit of myth in the very first chapter, which may be a later addition, according to some scholars. The bulk of the sutra contains purely as it were psychological and philosophical material, not a trace of imagery. So the students of that text presumably were drawn to the text because that type of approach appealed to them and they started that sort of tradition; whereas another group of students would be studying the Amitayur-dhyana Sutra, which is nothing but imagery, with an absolute minimum of conceptual teaching; they were attracted by that. It is not that anybody abandoned anything; they just were attracted to, and developed and followed, that particular

form of Buddhist practice which happened to appeal to them.

Dhammarati: Does it make sense, do you think, to follow your own preferences like that, or do you deprive yourself of resources by [doing so]?

S.: Well, one certainly should not follow whims and fancies; and I think nowadays in the West people do tend to do that. I think very few people have a sound instinct in these matters which they can just follow. I therefore think that one needs nowadays always to consult one's spiritual friends and take their advice, or at least see how they see things, see how they see you, before you come to any definite decision. Otherwise it's easy to say: 'Oh, I'm a Ch'an type, I'm a Zen type; I don't need to study books, I don't need to do visualization practices, I can just look at a leaf. I can develop Insight in that way.' Well, in principle you can, in theory you can; but does it actually happen like that? Maybe after 20, 30, 40 years of spiritual practice, it will; perhaps you need not bother much about visualization practices then, or any form of practice. Just to keep your eyes and ears open as you go about your ordinary daily business will be quite enough. But that is a long way ahead for most people. Ideally I was going to say if you were all Buddhas, but I suppose if you were all Buddhas you wouldn't need to practise anyway but ideally, there should not be any such separate thing as religion, really. It is only due to the imperfections of human nature that there is such a thing as religion, a separate thing. I sometimes quote something that Herodotus said in this connection with regard to the ancient Egyptians. The ancient Egyptians apparently I think, according to Herodotus; it is some years since I read him were quite surprised, not to say shocked, that the Greeks that is to say, the ancient Greeks that we admire so much had such things as physical exercises, because they thought that if a man led a balanced life, that life would involve exercise in a quite natural way, that he would not have to set apart a gymnasium or anything of that sort to which he went to do exercises which were just exercises and had no practical value or purpose or utility. The ancient Egyptians thought your ordinary daily life should include drawing water from the well and carrying things on your head; you shouldn't need a separate thing such as physical exercise to keep you healthy. What you needed was a balanced human life. So I sometimes apply that, ideally, to everything: you shouldn't need a separate thing called art, or a separate thing called religion; these should be integral parts of one's ordinary daily life. It is quite interesting in this connection I am digressing a bit, but never mind, we have only got seven questions in India, when I go to various places, when I go to villages especially, and when I enter certain houses, very often just mud huts, to have a cup of tea or something, the womenfolk would often, prior to my arrival, decorate the whole cow-dunged courtyard with beautiful and elaborate patterns and designs in rice paste. They were really quite like mandalas, they [278] were often real works of art, but they would just be done for that particular purpose, somebody's visit, and they would just be wiped out afterwards. So they don't think of it as art, it is just one of those things you do to welcome a visitor, to welcome an honoured guest. This is just a modest example of the way in which you might say art is completely integrated with life. So, again, religion is like that. In extreme cases, you know, religion becomes completely separated from life. We know that happens in the West with some forms of Christianity: it is just something that you do, certain motions you go through on Sunday morning in church, a separate place set aside for those particular exercises. You just go and lift your spiritual dumbbells, or you just watch somebody else lifting them! And that's it, you've done it! That's religion, ... it has no bearing on your life, there is no connection with your life, nothing to do with your life. That is the extreme development. You can even have something like that happening, I'm afraid, in I won't say in Buddhism, but in some Buddhist countries. I got a letter from someone only today, written

from Thailand, from a meditation centre, and he was deeply shocked and upset this was one of the things he wrote to me about because apparently, in this meditation centre, he had seen the Thai women cooks, who of course were devout Buddhists, set upon a dog that was injured and beat it very seriously with sticks; and he was absolutely horrified. And the dog had been attacked by another dog, and its throat was half hanging out, and he just couldn't understand how these women could behave like that, being Buddhists; and there they were in a meditation centre, cooking with great piety, but had absolutely no feeling for that dog at all, and he was very, very upset. So clearly for them their Buddhism had become rather separated from their life. Nonetheless, since we are unintegrated, etc. etc., we have to take up particular specific observances and practices which we denominate religious; but we must not forget that, once we are Enlightened, there won't be any such things. Our ordinary daily life, our ordinary eating and drinking, will become our religious practice. That is the end, that is the ideal. There won't be anything specifically religious, as distinct from non-religious, that we will be engaging in. The Buddha didn't practise anything called Buddhism, you could say. In that sense not in this superficial, pseudo-universal sense, of course the Buddha was not a Buddhist, he couldn't have been anything, he was just the Buddha. So Buddhas don't need to be Buddhists, but those who are not Buddhas, they do, and they need to practise and need to do certain specific things and not do, or try not to do, other specific things. But we must not forget that all these specific things and special things eventually maybe in some decades, maybe in several lifetimes merge back into our ordinary everyday life, which then becomes an Enlightened or by next time is an Enlightened ordinary everyday life. So the Ch'an or Zen people think more or less in those terms, and in a way quite rightly, I think. The point is whether you can actually get to that stage, or are at that stage, or whether it is just a matter of words; whether it is just a matter of mouth Zen, and not the real thing.

Dhammarati: Would one ramification of this be much more attention to our daily experience, do you think?

S.: Yes, this is one reason why, in the course of last year, I have been speaking quite a lot in terms of mindfulness or emphasizing mindfulness; because sometimes you see people coming straight out of the Shrine Room, having apparently had a good meditation, lots of concentration, but immediately they start behaving in what seems to be a quite unmindful manner; and that can't really help.

Mike: With reference to the point about Buddhas not being Buddhist ...; is it possible that an earlier Buddha not the Buddha but somebody just Enlightened through Buddhist tradition would carry on with Buddhism just for reasons of aesthetics; that they actually liked doing pujas, liked to meditate?

[279]

S.: Well, there is no reason why one should not carry on as a Buddhist; one has to presumably carry on with something! just to pass the time until your Parinirvana day. (Laughter.) One doesn't mind if there are pujas going on around one; one joins in quite happily, especially if you know it is good for other sentient beings that you should do so. You have no objection to pujas, just because you are a Buddha! But so far as you are concerned, in a way, it is just marking time until the Parinirvana.

Mike: Then what? (Laughter.)

S.: Well, there again, perhaps, one should consult one's own experience of ...!s there a 'then' in Enlightenment anyway?

Chairman: I think, ... this has all been in answer to the first half of Prakasha's question. (Laughter.)

S.: I thought I had touched on the second half, but perhaps not completely.

Chairman: Yes, but the fourth part is not answered.

Danavira: Could you say the end result of the practice of Buddhism is that one's everyday life becomes more and more ... Enlightened?

S.: Yes, the end result of the practice of Buddhism is that you cease to practise Buddhism, because it is a means to an end. When you reach the further shore, you are free to discard the raft. Anyway, what is the actual question going to be?

Danavira: The actual question is that in a way it seems a bit odd take Buddhist names: you just find out when you are being ordained, go and

S.: Well, that's all part of the raft. Once you get to the other shore, you don't need maybe you don't need a Buddhist name; you can just say: 'Me Buddha!' (Laughter.) Maybe even when you become a Buddha people will still want to call you something; they might think it a bit impersonal just to address you as 'Buddha'. In the Buddha's lifetime he was addressed as Gautama, which was his clan name. After all, if a lot of people gain Enlightenment, how are we going to distinguish all these Buddhas unless you have a special name given when you gain Buddhahood, just as you get a special name when you become ordained? I don't know; we will wait and see, when we have a lot of Buddhas around, whether they need new names or not. It would be rather confusing if you had a lot of Enlightened people and they were all called simply 'Buddha'. It wouldn't really matter because, in a sense, on the highest level they would be interchangeable; it wouldn't matter which one of them gave the talk or led the puja! They would understand among themselves, presumably especially as there weren't any selves, anyway! (Laughter.) But it might be a bit confusing to ordinary people.

Chairman: I'm not quite sure but I think Prakasha had a second question.

Prakasha: Yes, ... the first question. This has got two parts as well. How do the four brahma viharas relate to the dhyanas? Can the brahma viharas be transcendental?

S.: It does seem, studying the Pali Canon, that the brahma viharas are, at least to some extent, envisaged as an alternative route. There are some scholars, notably Mrs Rhys Davids, who believe that the four brahma viharas were not part of original Buddhism, and were incorporated at a later stage, albeit perhaps by the Buddha himself. I am not quite sure about that, but nonetheless it is a fact that, though the brahma viharas feature very prominently in the Pali Canon, they are not [280] included in quite a number of the important numerical lists. What all that adds up to is really quite difficult to say. This is one of the things I have been thinking about and collecting material on for some time. But, at the very least, one could say that the Brahma viharas represent a parallel - or, one might say, even better, a convergent path. No doubt some Abhidharmika has correlated the dhyanas and the Brahma viharas, but

nonetheless it does seem that they do represent an approach in their own right, let us say. Again, consult one's own experience: do the Brahma viharas, do the metta bhavana or the karuna bhavana and compare your experience doing them with your experience when you practise concentration and, so to speak, enter the dhyanas. Are there any similarities? What are you doing in the one case that you are not doing in the other? Or are you basically doing the same thing? This is one of the quite interesting problems relating to perhaps even the Buddha's own teaching, which will have sooner or later to be cleared up. As I said, it is one of the things I have been thinking about for some time. I think they do overlap to some extent, these two paths, but it isn't easy to see exactly how. There must be a certain amount of common ground, because there are certain common positive mental factors which are involved.

One of my theories - though it is only a provisional one - is that it may be that the Brahma viharas actually belong to an earlier phase of the Buddha's teaching, a phase in which there was more emphasis on worlds attained than on states experienced. Do you see what I mean? We do find in Buddhism on the one hand a hierarchy of states and on the other a hierarchy of worlds, and the two are correlated; and there are a number of texts, a number of passages, where it is said that the way to the Brahmaloaka is through the Brahma vihara. So it would seem that the Brahma vihara is looked at as a way to the Brahmaloaka; and that perhaps at that time one thought more in terms of entering or dwelling in a Brahmaloaka than in terms of achieving a certain dhyana. That may be; as I say, this is just a theory of mine at the moment, something that requires further investigation.

Does that cover both parts of the question?

Prakasha: Yes. The second part was: can the Brahma viharas be transcendental?

S: Ah. Again, this is something that requires investigation. Generally, of course, in Buddhism they are taken to be mundane; this is the standard tradition. But there are certain passages in Pali texts which point to the possibility of their originally having been understood as transcendental; but again, this is something which requires investigation. Perhaps I should qualify that: not so much themselves Transcendental but as being, let us say, approaches to the Transcendental, avenues to the Transcendental. But again, this is one of the things I hope to look into further, but if I am not able to do it I hope somebody else will do so instead. But it will require quite a comprehensive survey of Buddhist literature, especially the canonical literature in Pali and Sanskrit, and quite a bit of reflection on it and quite a lot of comparison with one's own personal experience and perhaps with the personal experience of other people, too.

Prakasha: Does the Brahma realm correspond to a particular dhyana?

S: Here again, there is no consistency. It sometimes seems as though all the realms above the - hm, let me see; all the realms corresponding to the rupa dhyanas collectively are regarded as Brahmaloaka, but again some of those subdivisions have special as it were Brahma names: the Realm of the Retinue of Brahma, the Realm of Ministers of Brahma, and so on. So there is no consistency in the terminology. Sometimes it seems as though all the kamaloka realms are presided over by Mara, but then again sometimes it would seem as though they are presided over by Brahma in the lower sense of the term. Sometimes, again, the whole of the rupaloka realms seem to be presided over by Brahma. but Brahma in a higher, as it were more spiritual,

sense. So there are a lot of at least apparent [281] inconsistencies in the texts which I think have to be sorted out. But the overall picture is very clear, about a hierarchy of worlds corresponding to a hierarchy of mental, or better still spiritual, states. That overall picture, overall principle, is very clear indeed, with the dichotomy between subject and object, state and world, becoming more and more subtle the higher you go. That is the general picture, the general principle. So perhaps one should stick firmly to that and just leave the details to work themselves out, so to speak, little by little, in the course of time.

Tape 27, Side 1

Prakasa: If the Brahma viharas may have been avenues to the Transcendental: does that mean an avenue down which you go and at one point you sort of enter into the Transcendental if you keep going down the same avenue - is that what you mean?

S: No, I wasn't thinking in those terms. Actually, I have in mind a specific text, but I didn't want to go into it because that would take us too far astray; though here is a particular text where someone practises the Brahma viharas and as a result of practising that Brahma vihara he has a vision, as one might say, of Sanankumara, and Sanankumara gives him a certain teaching. But the teaching is definitely pertaining to Insight. So the avenue of approach was the Brahma vihara, but what is it that one approaches? One approaches that particular Brahma, Sanankumara, corresponding perhaps to Manjusri or Manjughosha, and one gains, or gets, or one is given, as it were, a teaching pertaining to Insight, pertaining to the Transcendental. I was thinking of that, but it was something I didn't really want to go into because it raises all sorts of questions that I don't want to 'say anything about very definitely at this stage.

How are we going with the questions?

Chairman: We've got three questions left. The next question is from Tejamitra.

Tejamitra: I have two questions, but they are both on offerings.

In our festive pujas, we often make offerings other than incense, sometimes quite elaborate. However, if any of these comprise our own property, we always have it back. Do you think we should have them back? If it is an offering, shouldn't it be given for good?

S: Yes, I have thought about this from time to time myself, because I have become aware that people offer things and take them back straight afterwards. In fact, sometimes people at Padmaloka come to me and borrow things for offerings, and I have to ask them to make sure they are returned afterwards! So, in the first place, they don't even offer something that is their own - they borrow something - and then, of course, they have to give it back because it is borrowed. So has it really been given, or has it been given in any sense at all? What does one mean by giving an offering? You are making the offerings to a Buddha image, which is presumably inanimate; it is not quite the same thing as putting a plate of food in front of somebody and then taking it away before he has had a chance to eat it. If one did that, there would be very quick protests! But in a way we do the same sort of thing in the pujas, but the Buddha doesn't protest because, being Enlightened, he doesn't mind, one might say! But it is quite an interesting point. I think in principle, probably, things which are given, even in the context of a puja, should be just given, and left; definitely given away and given for keep's.

So perhaps that would rule out certain things; because, all right, supposing you have things, you made offerings that were given for keeps, well, the Buddha is not going to get up off the altar afterwards and just gather them up and take them home with him. Someone has got to do something with them. So what is that? So I think, if one wants to enforce, so to speak, this principle of not taking back [282] offerings, you have got to have very simple offerings: either flowers, which will naturally wither after a few days, or incense, which is going to be burned, or just paper things - paper cut-out offerings which can be ceremonially burned later on.

But I think there is not much point in offering your favourite crystal or your favourite shell, and then carefully taking it back afterwards. Perhaps one should be clearer in one's own mind as to what you are actually offering and what you are contributing as a temporary decoration of the shrine. Do you see what I mean? But I have felt more than once it is rather odd that one gives things, makes offerings, and then is very careful to take them back afterwards. But at least, perhaps it is just a matter of being clear in one's own mind as to what it actually is that you are doing; otherwise you could give a donation - say, 'Here I am giving you \$10 donation for such-and-such fund,' and an hour later you say, 'can I have my donation back, please?' It wouldn't go down very well.

Tejamitra: The second part of the question is quite separate. It is about offerings made to the Buddha on his own account (?).

In the Sutta Nipata, the Buddha meets a wealthy farmer called Bharadvaja on his alms round, and he is offered a vat of rice water which he refuses...

S: A whole vat?

Tejamitra: I think so.

S: All right. I will take your word for it.

Tejamitra: There is a discourse, and he converts Bharadvaja. But subsequently he asks that the rice water which he had refused be poured away somewhere where there are no small beings in the water, and when this is done it hisses and boils. The Buddha says that there are no beings, neither gods or men, who could drink that water. Why is this? What makes food refused by the Buddha poisonous?

S: Not exactly poisonous; it is more like indigestible. But this does parallel a similar incident in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, with regard to the food offered by Cunda. There has been no satisfactory explanation of these incidents. Sometimes it is said that anything offered to a Buddha, food which the Buddha has accepted, becomes imbued with spiritual energy to such an extent that others just aren't able to cope with it, and therefore it should not be offered to them. But even that isn't very easy to understand. So I think this is another of those incidents in the Pali Canon that we haven't really so far got a key to. I can't say that I am satisfied myself with any of the explanations I have seen. But neither have I been able to think up a satisfactory explanation. It seems as though the episode is in each case to be taken literally; it doesn't seem to be symbolical. But, on the other hand, one can't really understand what happened. I am afraid there is no neat answer to that question. Perhaps you will just have to ponder on it.

Chairman: OK, the next question is from Prakasha again, on the Bodhicitta. (Pause.) OK, so that takes us to the last question, which is Tony's question, on doctrine followers and faith followers.

Tony: This followed on from, I think, the last session, where I think you were saying that one should be quite clear whether one is a doctrine follower or a faith follower, or at least not get stuck in between the two, where you really end up as neither. So I was ...

S: Maybe I should say something about that. I was not so much emphasizing that you should decide to which spiritual type you belong. I think the context was that [283] I was warning people, for instance, not to try to wriggle out of study, saying, 'Oh, I'm not a doctrine follower, I'm a faith follower type.' That was the sort of thing I was getting at; not that you necessarily had to classify yourself as this or as that, but that you should not use the fact that you were allegedly this or that as an excuse for not engaging in a particular kind of practice. Anyway ...

Tony: So would you say that you shouldn't really ponder on what type of follower you are? Just make the use of what connections you have?

S: I don't think, at the beginning at least, you should ponder - say, as a Mitra. Yes, one should devote oneself to meditation, keep up a regular meditation practice; yes, one should do some Dharma study; yes, one should help out in practical ways wherever one can. But I think as the years go by, and especially as one gets ordained, one will probably find that one gets more from this or that particular element in one's spiritual life, and is able to go more deeply through it than out of certain other elements; and one will tend, perhaps, to concentrate on that particular element more and more, go more and more deeply into it - without, of course, completely giving up the other element. And you may then begin to suspect that perhaps you are a doctrine follower because your predominant interest does seem to be Dharma study; or you may begin to suspect that perhaps you are a faith follower, because you really do just love big elaborate pujas more than anything else in life. Do you see what I mean? But I think one shouldn't think about this at all at the beginning; it should be more an idea or thought that occurs to you naturally, just after a few years when you just look at the particular pattern that your own spiritual life and practice is assuming. Certainly I don't think it need be anything to which one attaches very great importance. The main thing is to be a follower, whether a doctrine follower or faith follower.

But one does notice, in the case of Order Members, say, within seven or eight years, that some definitely have a bent for study; they get a lot out of Dharma study and want to do more and more of it. Others, perhaps, have a definite tendency towards meditation and want to do more and more of that. Whether circumstances permit in one way or the other, that is another story, but some do develop a very definite bent towards meditation, a definite liking for meditation, more than for any other kind of spiritual activity; so they are the kayasaksins, the body witnesses. Those seem to be the two main types, so to speak, at present. We don't seem to have so many faith followers; not of the traditional type, anyway.

: What would you say ... for the faith follower? Is it just doing puja? ...

S: No, I don't think it is that. But it is certainly not study. Perhaps one could say that the faith follower - this is something I have said before - gets his greatest inspiration out of people.

You might even say that a faith follower is one who attaches very great importance to spiritual friendship, or who perhaps gets more out of that than anything else. Some people do seem to get more out of studying a good sutra than they get out of contact with their living spiritual friends; but others seem definitely to get more out of contact with their living spiritual friends than even the greatest sutra, just reading it by themselves. Of course, you can have both together.

Gerry: Bhante, what percentage of people would you say have a type? Or do most people come somewhere between the two?

S: It is not easy to say. I think, in the case of the Order, it is probably premature to say. I did mention a little while ago that, maybe after seven or eight years, you see that at least some Order Members have a definite tendency towards study or a definite tendency towards meditation. But very often circumstances don't permit people to specialize; circumstances especially around, say, a [284] public Centre almost oblige them to be all-rounders, regardless of what their personal preferences are. And usually people are quite happy to meet the needs the objective situation and forgo the further development of their special interests, at least for the time being.

Dhammarati: I was reading an issue of *Shabda*, and Vajraloka community were outlining their plans for courses for meditation teachers, and recently there have been courses for study group leaders, especially with *Mitra* study. It seems to me that while you've still got demands from a Centre to be an all-rounder, it seems ... of things in the Movement ... to be a specialist.

S: Yes, I think there is some difference between a large public Centre and a small one. Around a small public Centre, where perhaps you have just got two, three, or four Order Members, everybody has to do a bit of everything; everybody has to lead meditation classes, take beginners; everybody has to give talks, everybody has to do a bit of work on the accounts; everybody has to do a bit of everything, there are only one or two of them, they have to do a lot of everything! But supposing you have got 20, 30 Order Members around a public Centre, well, it may then become necessary for particular Order Members to start specializing. It is certainly necessary for someone to start specializing in doing accounts! You can have just four or five people doing a little bit each. Also, as you get more and more people and there is a wider spread of intellectual interest, perhaps study groups and study classes become more demanding, so you need someone able to specialize. There is also the question of the sheer number of study groups and meditation classes; maybe you would need someone who is doing nothing but lead study, someone who is doing nothing but teaching meditation around the Centre.

So I think when the Centre becomes quite big by FWBO standards, involving a lot of Order Members in its running, then probably some of them at least have to start becoming specialists in different aspects of Dharma activities. But I think nonetheless you have to have still a substantial number of all-rounders,- I think that the chairman, in particular, needs to be able to involve himself in all of them, even if he doesn't actually do this, otherwise there is the danger of the administrative side of things getting out of touch with the spiritual side of things, where perhaps you have got a lot of people, say, involved in running things and looking after the organization, but they don't have time - I won't say they don't have time to meditate, because that should not be possible - but don't have time to actually run any classes; they are just administering the Centre and the classes, and on the other hand the people

actually taking the, classes don't perhaps have much to do with the administration of the Centre. So if that sort of situation develops, it isn't very desirable. One should be just aware of all the factors.

Dhammarati: Do you think that the fact that Order Members in small Centres have to be all-rounders is an unfortunate necessity, that ideally we should be evolving towards choosing and specializing, or ...

S: No, I think one should specialize only on the basis of a reasonably good general knowledge and general experience of things. I think it is not a bad thing that one has to be an all-rounder for a while; but it can't continue indefinitely because, as an Order Member becomes older and more mature, more experienced, he develops a capacity to specialize and go more deeply into certain things than others. I think it should be possible for him to do that. But perhaps for the young Order Member it is quite good to have a quite broad experience of things. Maybe not immediately, but little by little.

Chairman: OK, that's our last question for this evening.

[284]

Tape 28, Side 1

Chairman: Tonight we come to the Question and Answer session on ch.7, 'Benevolence and Compassion'. We have seven questions. The first question is from Jarmo.

Jarmo: This is second-hand information, so could you correct me if I am wrong? On the Mitra Study Retreat in January, you mentioned that communism and feminism are the greatest threats to Western Buddhism. There are three questions here:

- 1) Why is it that communism and feminism are the greatest threats for Western Buddhism?
- 2) Can you see any other threats for Western Buddhism?
- 3) In what way should we safeguard Buddhism from these threats?

S.: I must say I can't remember making that statement, though I might have said something like it that is not impossible. But let's just go through it anyway; I will take the question on its own merits, regardless of whether I did or didn't say anything of that sort on a previous occasion. Let's go through the questions.

Jarmo: The first is why communism and feminism are the greatest threats for Western Buddhism.

S.: Ah. I think I would query, possibly, 'greatest'. I think they are threats, but I am not quite sure whether they could be classified as 'greatest'. I think the reason why communism in general is a threat is pretty obvious, in view of what has happened in China, what has happened in Tibet, what has happened in Vietnam, what has happened in Cambodia, what has happened in Laos, what has happened in North Korea. It would seem that communism is not very friendly disposed towards Buddhism; so, if communism in the East has behaved in that way, I doubt very much if we could expect any communist government to be more favourably

disposed to Buddhism in the West. In fact, I have heard that, in Russia, for instance, Buddhism is regarded with particular suspicion. Buddhism is certainly not encouraged there. One might say it is definitely discouraged, on the grounds that Buddhists are this is apparently the impression of the Russian Government pacifists, and pacifism is something which is not usually favoured by governments; least of all, perhaps, by a communist one. So I think the record of communism so far goes to show that it is a danger, rather than otherwise, to Buddhism. That is not to say that, for instance, someone like Marx might not have said, or might not have written, certain things that a Buddhist might find quite interesting or that he might even find himself in agreement with on occasion; but organized communism, in the sense of communist national states and communist governments, certainly do not seem to be good for Buddhism. As for feminism, that in some ways is not a question that concerns us, for obvious reasons; but you may come up against feminism from time to time. I must say here, though, that I always distinguish two kinds of feminism: what I call sometimes feminism with a small 'f' and feminism with a big 'F'. By feminism with a small 'f' I mean the belief that women have the same right to opportunities for personal growth, development and so on as men do. I think simply to believe that is feminism with a small 'f' and is not incompatible with Buddhism. But by Feminism with a capital 'F' I mean that belief which maintains that, throughout history, men have oppressed women, have done nothing but oppress women, that history is nothing but the history of the oppression of women by men, that women are the innocent victims, and that it is right and proper that women should hate men. This is what I call Feminism, and I think this is completely incompatible with [286] Buddhism. So one has to distinguish between these two things. So it is the latter which I see as constituting, perhaps not a danger to Buddhism in the West I think that would be to put it too strongly but at least it is capable of being perhaps a nuisance from time to time. I would not put it any more strongly than that. What were the other questions arising out of that?

Jarmo: Can you see any other threats for Western Buddhism?

S.: Oh, I can see threats all over the place. Conditioned existence itself is a threat. Mara is a threat. One's own weakness is a threat. One's own sloth and torpor is a threat, one's own craving is a threat. I think the greatest threats of all, probably, lie within rather than outside.

Jarmo: Within the individual or the organization?

S.: Within the individual. I think, in the case of the FWBO, at least, the organizational framework is quite sound; but an organizational framework doesn't run itself, it has to be run by individuals, and if the individuals do not behave and function truly as individuals, even the best organizational framework is not going to save you indefinitely. Any further point, or have we dealt with it all?

Jarmo: Well, the third was in what way we should safeguard or protect Buddhism from these threats?

S.: Well, there is only one short and simple answer to that, which is to be mindful of oneself, of the situation within which one finds oneself, of the conditions under which, as a Buddhist movement in the West, one has to function; and so on. You all remember, probably, Abraham Lincoln's famous statement that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance? It is rather like that.

Dhammarati: Would you like to say a bit more about how [the risks?] are in the individual?

S.: I would have thought it quite obvious, because Buddhism in the West, as anywhere else, is the individual, and any real threat to Buddhism in the West or anywhere else can only come from the individual who professes to follow Buddhism but does not in fact do so. I think if one has a band of individuals who are actually following Buddhism, actually trying to practise the Dharma, they don't really have very much to fear from external circumstances, however unfavourable they may appear to be. I think that is the main point. Of course, my remarks apply entirely to non-Stream Entrants; that can be taken as understood. So, if one wants to summarize it, one could say that the greatest danger to Buddhism in the West or anywhere else is that one just doesn't have enough Stream Entrants! If one wants really to safeguard the future of Buddhism in the West, one needs to devote oneself to destroying those first three Fetters and becoming a Stream Entrant, if one wants really to make sure of there being at least some genuine Buddhism and to some extent a genuine Buddhist movement in the West, or in the world. Murray: If this is the case, Bhante, why do you posit mindfulness as being the best safeguard rather than Insight?

S.: I am using mindfulness in the very wide sense. Don't forget that there are four Foundations of Mindfulness or satipatthanas, which include Insight. One can't separate the two, really. But until such time as one has developed Insight in the

[287]

strict sense, you at least need mindfulness, you at least need awareness. Without that, you are lost.

Dhammarati: I am just wondering if you had imagined sort of warning signs or indicators that the FWBO was developing, ceasing to be special individuals and becoming a group?

S.: Yes. I don't think one need add that last bit 'is becoming a group', because that would only be one of the symptoms, and it would be quite obvious if the FWBO was becoming a group. But there are certain things which, from time to time, do trouble me: certain things that I see, certain things that I notice, that are very small and insignificant apparently, but which could, if they developed to any extent, do serious harm to the movement. I think, above all, there is the question of misunderstandings between Order Members. And I know that, here and there in the Order, there are a few personal misunderstandings between individual Order Members, and sometimes these misunderstandings, with the attendant negative feelings, persist for years. There may not be any great flare-up or anything of that sort, but that lack of definite friendly feeling, or even the presence occasionally of an unfriendly feeling, is a danger signal. I tend to see that sort of thing as potentially constituting a very great threat to the Order and the Movement indeed. So I think if one becomes aware that anybody, any Order Member, whom you know, any Order Member within your chapter, is not, for one reason or another, on particularly friendly terms with another Order Member, if you can possibly do anything to resolve that, that is no doubt one of the very biggest services that you can render to the whole of the Movement, to the whole of the Order. This is something which, as I said, does concern me quite a lot. Even though these misunderstandings may be very slight, if they are not cleared up they will only fester, and they can only become worse, because as time goes by they will become more confirmed, and the more confirmed they become the more difficult they will be to resolve. A long-standing difference with someone becomes almost a part of your character, almost a part of your life. You find it perhaps very difficult to give it up, very difficult to get over it. I think this is something to which we should give very serious attention, whenever we become aware of it.

Dhammarati: Some of them seem to become very intractable, with both sides seemingly on their own ...

S.: This is true. It is very unfortunate. So I think the good friends, the spiritual friends of both parties, should do their utmost to see that any such differences or difficulties are resolved.

Buddhadasa: I just wondered, Bhante, when such cases occur, if people could be encouraged to re-establish communication with you, [where] their communication had broken down, because in those cases it is quite clear that you are willing to enter into communication, but perhaps other people aren't. It is sometimes very difficult to make people appreciate that; you can't make people ... It is only a suggestion ... (?) If Order Members are in communication with other Order Members, are you particularly upset or bothered by the fact that they may not be in communication with you?

S.: I think I am more concerned if they are not in good communication with one another, because even if they are not in good communication with me, at least from my side there is no problem! It is only from their side. But if Order Members are not in good communication with each other, there is a problem as it were from both sides; though I would prefer, obviously, that Order Members are not only in good communication with one another but also with me, at least to the extent of writing occasionally and letting me know how they are going on. Not so many days ago, I received a letter from an Order Member from whom I hadn't heard for four or five [288] years; so I was quite pleased that I did hear from him at last. It was only a couple of pages, but it was a letter.

Buddhadasa: Good.

Chairman: Now we have a question from Mike B...

Mike: You mentioned one of the dangers; can you think of any others?

S.: I can't offhand. I probably could if I sat down to it. But the one I mentioned is something that had actually concerned me over the last few years, one might say. Though I could think up others, they would probably, in comparison with that one, be a little academic. I am not seriously concerned about the Movement becoming too wealthy or too poor for that matter! Some people are sometimes a bit worried, it seems, lest the Order or the Movement, at least, the FWBO might have too much money at their disposal. I don't see that as a problem at all. I sometimes say that if someone were to come along and give me even a very large sum, even many millions, it wouldn't bother me in the least; I would know exactly what to do with it straight away! No problem! Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, are you concerned about the number of people who are actually on the dole? the number of people who are supported externally?

S.: Hm. I have been a little concerned with that, but I don't see that as a problem of principle. If we have too large a percentage of Order Members on the dole, it does to some extent constitute a practical problem, inasmuch as you are then in a vulnerable position. If, for instance, those Order Members who are on the dole or occupying responsible positions had their dole suddenly withdrawn, as it well might be, they would be in difficulties and have to search very quickly for means of support and therefore would not be able to do the work for the FWBO that they were doing before; so, from that point of view, yes, I am somewhat concerned. In a few cases though I must say it is only in a very few cases I am concerned lest

people should lose their self-sufficiency, almost, as the result of being too long on the dole. But I think I have that concern with regard to very, very few people indeed. My concern is mainly of the practical nature that I have mentioned, and I have aired that concern recently on several occasions, and people, certainly within the Order, are quite aware of that; and there are some, I know, who, even though they have been on the dole for maybe a couple of years or more, are not particularly happy about it, but in the circumstances do not see any real alternative, if the work that they are doing for the FWBO is not to suffer. The long-term solution is, of course, more businesses of our own, more coops.

Dhammarati: I have noticed, Bhante, that, compared to the ... success of movements [like] Rajneesh, we seem to generate wealth very slowly. Do you have any thoughts about why we seem to be so slow in generating successful businesses, in generating wealth?

S.: I have had some thoughts. I am not an expert on this subject, by any means; in some ways I am not all that interested in it, not in the details of it. But, on the one hand, we start without capital, we start without managerial experience; we just start with a lot of willing people who are prepared to work hard for very little money. So that is not really the best recipe for setting up a successful moneymaking business. You probably will get off the ground in the long run, and eventually do very well, especially if you manage to attract not only capital but also managerial skills. But it is going to take you a relatively long time to get there. I think one reason why a movement like Rajneesh's is able to attract quite a lot of money and quite a lot of skilled people is that they tend to appeal to those people who want a lot, in a sense at least in the form of promises - for [289] very little really in return. If you can convince them that what you are giving them is of tremendous value, it is the real message, the real Enlightenment, and at the same time they don't really have to do very much about it but they can have the feeling that they are well and truly on the spiritual path, if they are able to add all that to their present way of life, well, you will attract quite a lot of perhaps middle-class, upper middle-class, people, well-to-do people, who will go along with you and you will go along with them and you will mutually benefit each other. You Rajneesh or whoever it is will give them some kind of spiritual security, not to say some kind of spiritual flattery; and they will provide you with the wherewithal to do the things that you want to do. It's a deal: one can see this quite clearly. We don't operate in that way. In a way, we make things more difficult for ourselves. But I think, though we are comparatively small, we are really, from a spiritual point of view, much more solidly based. There was a very interesting news item quite recently about Rajneesh: that he had accused his three closest aides, publicly, at a press conference, of spiritual fascism and exploitation and embezzlement. Oh, yes; and they have, I believe, disappeared. I haven't got the next instalment of this thrilling story, but it seems that all is not well in Rajneeshville or Rajneeshpur, or whatever they call it. Yes, I had a little press cutting sent to me not very long ago to this effect. And he had stated at the press conference he hadn't realized what was going on, and that they were also guilty of spiritual terrorism and even political manoeuvrings that he was disowning. They were his three closest aides. I don't remember the names; I am not sure that the names even were given. Anyway, perhaps that is an unpleasant topic on which we need not dwell. Chairman: The next question, which follows on, is from Mike Perkin.

Mike: This is to do with the development of the Movement. I was wondering to what extent you have had to take calculated and perhaps considerable risks, and indeed to what extent you feel you are still having to do so?

S.: Calculated and ?

Mike: Calculated and perhaps considerable risks.

S.: Considerable! I was afraid you might have said 'cynical'! I was just about to disclaim any cynicism! Risks with regard to ?

Mike: In the development of the Movement, in order to establish it in the West at what is a very crucial time

S.: A risk? I am not sure what you might have in mind.

Mike: Well, for example, I heard that you did say, [in relation to] the development of the FWBO abroad, ..., that if it wasn't for what you considered to be quite a considerable threat of ... struggling, you would have preferred to just consolidate things in England. I was wondering

S.: Yes, it was partly that, and also if I could have been sure that I would have a pretty long time-span myself. But, again, one doesn't know. Perhaps one would have preferred to have done things more slowly and more cautiously. But it looks as though, one might say, the gamble is going to pay off!

Mike: So you don't feel that you haven't had to take risks ... ?

S.: I wouldn't have regarded that as a real risk. I don't think it ever prejudiced the success of the Movement, or even endangered the success or the existence of the Movement. I think it would have been better if we could have consolidated [290] more before spreading to the extent that we have. Nonetheless, it simply means that quite a few people have been stretched quite a bit more than they would otherwise have been, perhaps; that may not, from another point of view, have been a bad thing. I can't say that I thought of it as a risk, but only that I would perhaps have been happier had I had more time at my disposal to do everything. I think that applies generally. I would like to have more time, for instance, to spend on the letters I write; I sometimes have to write them more hastily than I would have liked to do. And sometimes I would have liked to spend more time preparing a lecture, or more time talking to somebody, more time doing almost anything; but that is not the situation. I would love to spend perhaps three or four months just polishing one lecture! but I won't deliver many lectures at that rate. I reluctantly allowed unedited transcripts to appear; that really offends my literary conscience. But, all right, it is better perhaps that the information should be available even in an imperfect form rather than that it should not be available for an indefinite period, because I am not going to be able to edit it all myself anyway, even if I live another 50 years, which is highly unlikely. So I take, one might say, some slight risk of people misunderstanding certain things that I have said, as recorded and transcribed, just because I have not been able to give my statements a final polish. Nonetheless, every seminar that is published in that form, unedited, is accompanied by a warning, which I hope people read and heed. One has to take the general sense of what I have said. It may be that occasionally I get a quotation not quite right, or something of that sort, or I don't fully explore a particular topic on that particular occasion. You have to see what I have said elsewhere and relate the two, or the three, or the four. Come to that, we would really like, ideally, to have six months at Il Convento rather than three; perhaps we take a risk in having only three! But perhaps one day

we will have six, or even have a year. I think that isn't going to be impossible in a few years' time, especially if some of our businesses make a lot of money and can afford to finance people at Il Convento or its equivalent for a whole year at a time; that would be I won't say ideal, but it would be a considerable improvement on the present situation.

Danavira: Bhante, when we were talking about the Movement, I wondered about two points. The first was: how many people do you think are involved in the FWBO in Britain and in the rest of the world, excluding India? Secondly, do you see any indications of the FWBO becoming more prominent in the world at large and in the Buddhist world in particular?

S.: There are three questions there. Let's have them one by one. The first is about numbers; what did you actually ask?

Danavira: I was wondering if you had any idea how many people were involved in the Movement, in Britain first of all, and then

S.: In Britain. Well, we know the number of Order Members, don't we, roughly? How many is it?

Voices: 270.

S.: In Britain how many in Britain? If that was the question.

Voices: 150, at a guess.

S.: At least. It is a little more than that, I think. Anyway, just say 150; then there is the number of Mitras there is well over double that number of Mitras. And then you have got all the Friends. And if you take 'involve' literally, you've got the people who take the Newsletter, Mitrata, read our publications, come along from time to time or have had fairly sustained contact with us, been on retreats. [291] I would say probably you could say, over the years, about 3,000 people. That is not all who have ever passed through; if you reckon all who have ever passed through in Great Britain, it is many times that, it is probably 10,000 to 15,000, at least. But people who are in reasonably regular contact with us at least, I would say about 3,000; which isn't a very large number, by any means. But the proportion of those who are involved in a quite intensive way is very high, because you have got your 150 Order Members, and you have got your 300odd Mitras, and even regular Friends. In India the situation is completely different, as you no doubt know, where you have got about 35 Order Members and maybe about 50 to 60 Mitras, and perhaps 100,000 Friends, at a quite conservative estimate! You asked 'in the world'; I think it is much more difficult to calculate that, because you can reckon the number of Order Members say about 240 altogether in the world; maybe about say, again a conservative estimate at least 500 Mitras; and then, of course, you have got all the Friends in Britain itself and, of course, in India, in Finland, in Holland, Germany, the States now, a few in Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, and one or two other places. And then what was the next question?

Danavira: What indications do you see of the FWBO becoming more prominent, first of all within the Buddhist world, relatively speaking, and ...

S.: I am not sure what you mean by 'prominent'. We are becoming better known; I think I can

say we are quite widely known. I think quite a lot of people in the Buddhist world who do take an active interest in, say, the international Buddhist movement, know about the FWBO. But I don't think one can say more than that; except that they are beginning not only to know about us but to take note of us. I think they are beginning to realize that we are a quite successful movement, albeit on not a very big scale, but certainly by as it were international Buddhist standards, by the standards of Western Buddhism, we are a quite successful, a quite viable movement. And it is known that we are growing steadily, that we have been growing steadily all the time. And people are gradually becoming more aware of us and taking us more and more seriously. There is no doubt about that. This has especially been the case over the last, say, two to three years in particular. I think the publication of Subhuti's book has played some part there, a quite important part. But, as regards prominent in the world, that is not so easy, because what is prominent in the world? To be prominent in the world you have got to throw a bomb or hijack a plane or something like that; you can very quickly attain worldwide notoriety in that way, but that is not the way that we operate. A pop singer is prominent, a politician is prominent, a criminal of any kind if he is criminal on a sufficiently large scale is prominent. Do you see what I mean? A newspaper is prominent, a political party is prominent. These are the sort of things that are prominent. You can say the Archbishop of Canterbury is prominent, in a way; the Bishop of Durham has been prominent I don't know whether he still is, but he was last year! I don't know whether he is this year; probably not, because you don't remain news for very long in the modern world, not unless you continue to be a nuisance of some kind. So we are not newsworthy; we are very dull, very pedestrian, unexciting, in the eyes of most people. So we don't attract much attention from the media; perhaps that is a good thing, and it has been a good thing so far. I have made a few modest appearances on television. I usually get, if I am lucky, two or maybe three letters as the result of an occasional appearance! which is not spectacular! I know that at least my mother watches eagerly! (Laughter.) I am not really sure whether anybody else does. I am not even sure whether all Order Members watch when I am 'on the box'. So, no, the FWBO doesn't exactly hit the headlines, but maybe it will one day. I am [292] not really very bothered about it. I am much more concerned with the building of it up slowly, steadily, on a proper foundation. And it is progressing, it is expanding; so I don't have any serious concern in that respect. Was there another part to the question?

Mike: There wasn't. I am sorry I used the word 'prominent' in asking the question!

S.: Well, something is prominent if it stands out, not to say sticks out. I don't think we quite do that, not even in Bethnal Green really. I am sure there are lots of people in Bethnal Green who haven't even heard of the FWBO or the LBC. I think we could be in fact, should be rather more outward-going than we are at present. I think perhaps we do tend to hide our light under a bushel; and, since the light is there, why should we hide it? But I think we should be outward-going in the sense of taking, and even making, every opportunity that we can just to make the Dharma more widely known to people.

Tape 28, Side 2

Chairman: I think Dhammarati had a point.

Dhammarati: ... said on that last comment.

Gerry: I remember a few years back you were hoping that the Order could double every two

or three years. Have you seen any moves in that direction, because expansion seems to have been quite linear up until now?

S.: Well, you can all count as well as I can! I just don't know, because human beings are concerned, individuals are concerned, and they are not wholly susceptible to statistical analysis or prediction or extrapolation or whatever you call it. I must say, I have sometimes felt a little disappointed that the Order isn't expanding more rapidly than it is not that one attaches importance to numbers as such, but one would rather have, obviously, 1,000 Order Members, real Order Members, than, say, 500 real Order Members. I am a little surprised that the Order hasn't grown more rapidly than it has. I suppose one factor that one needs to take into consideration is that the requirements for ordination are being upgraded all the time; one might even say practically every year. The standard is going up all the time. Perhaps if the standard had not gone up in that way, it would have been possible to have a very much larger number of Order Members, but then they would not be, perhaps, of the calibre that they are.

John: Bhante, I wondered if you were surprised at the relatively slow growth of women Order Members?

S.: I have been very surprised, and I have asked, inquired, what the reason might be on numberless occasions. I have cross-examined the women Order Members, individually and collectively, closely on a number of occasions. I am no wiser than I was; unless, of course, one falls back on a purely traditional view of the relative capacities of men and women, which I am rather reluctant to do. But the undeniable fact is that we have, well, a decreasing percentage of women Order Members. One can only hope, as the new women's country retreat centre gets into operation, that things will speed up, so far as they are concerned. I think we must not assume that there necessarily has to be the same number of women Order Members as men Order Members; I don't think one can regard that as desirable in the abstract. One isn't concerned about numbers in any way. But certainly, no woman who wants to Go for Refuge and is ready to Go for Refuge should be prevented from so doing; in fact, should be given every encouragement and opportunity to make herself ready. I must say that, personally, I give far more [293] individual attention nowadays to women Mitras than I give to men Mitras; I have much more personal contact with them on an individual basis. I hope it helps. I feel that I can now, to a great extent, quite safely leave the men Mitras to the men Order Members; I don't need to concern myself really very much or very actively. But I don't feel like that about the women Mitras. I don't feel I can leave them, so to speak, in the same way. So I do have much more personal contact with them. They come to see more much more regularly than do the men Mitras; they write to me much more frequently. I feel I need to concern myself about them individually, to a much greater extent than I do about the men Mitras. If you were to ask me any given woman Mitra, I could probably tell you much more about her than I could about her male opposite number.

Dhammarati: Do you have any thoughts about women Order Members' involvement in public Centres? I have heard a number of male Order Members saying more or less as a matter of principle that where they can have a man in a public situation they would prefer that, and they don't like to use women in leading roles in, for instance, a regulars' class or something like that.

S.: I don't think I've said anything like that in a general sort of way. Because if you have a large public Centre and you have both men and women coming along, obviously it is

desirable that you should have both men and women Order Members involved, and even leading things. What I might not have felt very happy about was the possibility I know sometimes this has happened of some of the women who may be coming along to a public Centre being pleased, for instance, when there is a woman Order Member leading things, for purely feminist reasons. Do you see what I mean? not because she is an Order Member and fitted to lead, but just because she is a woman, they feel rather pleased, as I say, for purely feminist reasons. So that is not a very healthy attitude and that should not be pandered to. I think that is the only comment of that kind that I would make.

Dhammarati: From the chapter's point of view and the Centre's point of view, do you think there are differences between men and women that make it objectively better for a man to be in that sort of leading situation than a woman?

S.: I think it is quite difficult to say. Probably, in most cases, one would find that the male Order Member was more equipped than the female Order Member. But if the female Order Member was sufficiently well equipped, I see no reason why she should not function in that way. For instance, in Holland, Vajragita is doing very well; whether she is succeeding in attracting young men, I don't know; she does seem to attract women rather more. That may be just because she is a woman. But there is no doubt she is functioning quite effectively there, even though she is on her own. In the same way, Jayapushpa has done quite well in Malaysia, despite great difficulties. So I think one has to primarily in the case of an Order Member look at the individual. But I think a woman Order Member should not mind, say, stepping down, so to speak, if, in a particular situation, it is more appropriate that a male Order Member leads or takes a more active part, and so on. Order Members should not really look at things in that way; just at who is the most suitable person. If the situation seems to need a male Order Member, fine; if it seems to need a female Order Member, fine. If it doesn't really matter whether it is a male Order Member or a female Order Member, all right, you just go according to merits, use the more suitable person anyway.

Dhammarati: Some of the difficulty seems to be in deciding which criteria are objective and which criteria have more to do with partisan positions. If you say anything about the criteria you are sort of describing in what way a man generally would be better equipped.

S.: It seems to me, looking at it very generally and, of course, you are probably going to get me into quite a lot of trouble with at least some people as I look [294] at the situation, as I look around the Movement especially, it does seem that men usually have more stamina than women. In some situations you do need a lot of stamina, both physical, mental, emotional and so on. Quite a few women that one knows break down rather easily under pressure. They might even cry and so on. The situation just doesn't really permit that sometimes. So it does seem that very often men have more stamina than women, and where stamina is called for it would seem that you need a man not that all men have the same degree of stamina, but on the whole, broadly speaking, men do seem to have more stamina than women. I can't imagine any woman Order Member, despite the very good qualities that many of them have, doing, say, what Lokamitra has done in India. I can't imagine any of the women Order Members doing that. There are quite a lot of men I can't imagine doing what Lokamitra has done I can imagine some of them doing it, but I can't imagine any of the women Order Members doing what he has done, under those very difficult circumstances, where tremendous stamina, tremendous drive was required. I am the only one really who knows what it has cost Lokamitra to get things moving in the way that he has; it required an almost superhuman

effort. And I don't think any of the women Order Members, with all their good qualities, could have succeeded; I am quite sure they couldn't. They couldn't have done a hundredth of what he has done. I would put it as high as that. So one has to take into account people's qualities and capacities, qualifications, in a quite objective way, including the fact that they are men or that they are women, with all the special endowments and the weaknesses, perhaps, of their particular sex. I think one should be able to look at these questions in a quite objective way, without allowing it to become an issue of men versus women, or anything of that sort; certainly so far as the Order is concerned. I know that the vast majority of women Order Members now do look at things in a quite sensible, objective way, but there are women coming from outside Friends, maybe, but maybe even a few of the Mitras still with some trace of feminist ideas, Feminist with a capital F. And that can sometimes create slight difficulties. But we should not give way. If there is a demand, say, that a woman should lead something just because last week it was led by a man, we should not give way to that. If it is appropriate that a woman should lead, fine: even if she led last week, never mind. But there should not be any attempt to achieve some kind of parity on purely theoretical, ideological grounds. 'We had a woman last week, therefore we must have a man this week,' or 'Last week it was a man, therefore it must be a woman this week,' or 'this year,' or whatever. That is really not right. Also I don't think it shows any great regard for women anyway just to give them a sort of statutory innings, rather than consider them on their merits. It is not a compliment to anybody not to consider them on their merits, whatever those merits may be. Also one may well find that, in some cases, women have special qualities that can be made use of. One might say that, in some ways, they are much less prone to competitiveness and quarrelling than men are, and sometimes they can function as peacemakers between the warring males. One sometimes does find that. That is quite a valuable quality or valuable asset.

Ian: This is almost a ... point. Have you had any thoughts on any particular ways in which the Movement should be more outward-going?

S.: Well, I mentioned especially spreading the Dharma. I feel we should be much more outward-going in giving lectures, in giving talks, accepting invitations or even getting ourselves invited by schools, by Rotary Clubs, Women's Institutes whoever you can wangle an invitation from. Try to appear on, say, local TV, local radio. I think that is comparatively easy to do. Write letters to the press where any sort of issue is raised on which Buddhism might usefully have something to say. Just make as many friends as you can, develop as much influence as you can. There are our publications spreading our publications around, getting them into local bookshops; because our distributors are not able to cover absolutely the whole field. There are all sorts of things of that sort one can do. One can just be more outward-going with regard to people, as you move around. In a more [295] organized way, of course, we can be more enterprising in starting up new Centres, not stay quite so close to home base, perhaps; at least after we have had a few years' experience as an Order Member.

Chairman: We move to a new topic now with a question from Dhammarati on offerings in Puja.

Dhammarati: It arose from last night, Bhante. A question about some of the new ritual forms that seem to develop. Do you have any thoughts on, for instance, making offerings to the leader of a Puja during the Puja? Have you seen that happen?

S.: What is the question?

Dhammarati: Should that idea be encouraged, should it be discouraged?

S.: Should what be encouraged or discouraged?

Dhammarati: Something I have seen in a number of Pujas, both from the floor and from the point of view of leading it: that somebody will make an offering to the shrine and then make an offering to the leader of the Puja. Do you have any thoughts on that?

S.: Not really. The format of a Puja should be, as it were, more or less fixed or settled, and that should be adhered to. But I think one has at the same time to leave some room for spontaneous gestures of whatever kind; but they mustn't be disruptive, they mustn't disrupt the overall pattern, as it were. Someone might feel very much like going up to the shrine and offering his candle or his stick of incense, and then standing up and chanting his own mantra loudly 108 times; but that would disrupt the proceedings, so he should not do that. But if there is some expression of devotion he wants to make, whether by way of an extra offering or something of that sort which does not disrupt the proceedings but fits in quite smoothly, I think he should be free to do that. One doesn't want to make the framework of the Puja too rigid or to discourage individual initiative or spontaneous expression of feeling. But the person concerned must consider the appropriateness of his gesture or whatever it is he wants to do.

Dhammarati: I have actually been in the situation of leading a Puja and somebody made an offering to me after making an offering to the shrine, and I did not feel completely ...

S.: Did you say after or before?

Dhammarati: After he had made an offering to the shrine.

S.: I think maybe you should ask yourself why you didn't feel quite happy or comfortable with it. If you see what I mean. Maybe you just have to accept that you do have your admirers!

Dhammarati: You should have seen him!(?)

S.: In the case of the shy English, you should be presuming they were English just too pleased that they actually ventured to express themselves spontaneously on certain occasions!

Jarmo: Just now you mentioned that it is preferable to make an offering which you don't take back afterwards. Would it be a good idea that, when you make a [296] valuable offering, instead of taking it back personally, you give it to a spiritual friend?

S.: You could certainly do that. But again, an offering to the Buddha, I suppose, is an offering to the Buddha. You could always give your spiritual friend something anyway. I suppose one needs to go more into this question of when you make an offering to the Buddha, what are you actually doing? In the East, sometimes, people make an offering in a temple, they put some money on the altar. It is understood it goes to the organization or the order, or even the individual who owns or runs the temple and it is to be used for the upkeep of the temple, even for his own expenses, and so on. Therefore, I think one should ask oneself what is one

actually doing? Supposing someone comes to the LBC, let us say just a Friend, a Friend who comes to the LBC, goes into the Shrine Room, takes part in whatever is happening there: all right, he feels like offering some flowers, he offers some flowers. But supposing he wants to give a donation to the LBC; he could just place it on the altar, and then it would be no doubt gathered up by someone and handed over to the Treasurer. I think that would be the usual procedure. Or he could just go and see the Treasurer and say, 'I'd like to make a donation.' Do you see what I mean? So I think there are two kinds of offering: an offering where it has no actual value but is just an expression of devotion, and, secondly, where it has some value and where the value is to be realized for the benefit of whatever body, whatever group is maintaining that particular shrine. So, under certain circumstances, it might be better just to make the donation. But I don't really see the point of, let us say, offering a ring, putting the ring on the altar, and then you take it back and you give it to a friend. Do you see what I mean? If you want to give the friend a ring, all right, give him a ring; if you want to make an offering to the Buddha, make an offering to the Buddha; if you want actually to give something valuable, all right, make a donation to whatever organization, so to speak, is conducting that particular shrine. Because the Buddha can't personally receive anything; that really is the point. If the Buddha was personally living, you could hand over the cash to him, or whatever, if he accepted it; but if you want to give something of a valuable nature to the Buddha, it means in effect you want to give it for the Dharma, you want to give it for Buddhism, you want to give it to a particular group or organization or living individual. So I think that is a different thing from actually offering something in the course of worship to the image on the shrine, as it were, as an expression of personal devotion. I think perhaps the two should be kept more or less distinct.

Gerry: Sometimes some people make offerings of valuable objects of aesthetic beauty, and again at the end will come and collect them back again. Do you think there could be something to be said for perhaps having an official shrine-keeper for every shrine, so ... ?

S.: Well, I did say the other day that you should be clear in your own mind whether you are actually giving something to the shrine or to the Buddha, or whether you are just lending it for the purposes of decoration. You have to be a bit careful about this, because sometimes people put hideous things on the shrine. They think they are beautiful, but you might not. I remember when I was Kalimpong I used to have a bit of a problem with some of my Tibetan friends, because I had a shrine there and I used to look after it very carefully and always had quite beautiful flowers on the shrine; and the Tibetans would come and see me and they would go into the shrine, throw away all my beautiful flowers my marigolds and dahlias and things like that and they would replace them by paper artificial flowers; which, according to them, were much nicer! I used to have these hideous artificial paper flowers put on my shrine, and sometimes there were dreadful wax things that gathered the dust, very crudely made not like the artificial flowers you get nowadays; this was 20 or 30 odd years [297] ago and it was in India. They were really crude-looking things. But the Tibetans were firmly convinced that they were preferable Tibetans coming down from Tibet always seemed to think that something artificial was better than something natural: tinned and powdered milk was much, much better for you than fresh milk; they really believed this; or tinned chicken all the way from England, especially was much, much better for you than chicken freshly slaughtered! So, in the same way, these paper flowers or wax flowers were much, much better than these ordinary old flowers you got out of the garden! So I used to have great difficulty; I used to usually leave them there for a day or for a night, remove them and replace them by fresh flowers, real flowers, again. So you have to take that into consideration. I had good friends,

Hindu friends, who used to come and want to decorate my shrine, or improve my shrine, with little images of Ganesha and Lakshmi and various Hindu gods and goddesses; well, I used to let them put them there; I used not to object, but as soon as they were gone I would just remove them. Or they would bring along a large framed coloured photograph, a rather hideous one, of their favourite guru or something like that, and insist on installing it there for luck, or whatever; and again I would have to remove it. Or they would bring a pair of really hideous vases, which really offended my aesthetic sense. Again, I would suffer them for a few days and then remove them quietly put them in the kitchen or somewhere like that. So those sort of things have to be taken in consideration. So, yes, perhaps to come back to the question you do need a shrine-keeper with taste, who will keep these sort of things under control. It is not so bad in England, but in India people get very offended if they bring something for the shrine and you don't use it. One good lady brought me an orthodox Hindu-type shawl I don't know if you have seen the things, they are bright yellow and they are stamped with the name of Rama in red all over and she was insisting that I should wear this because it was a holy shawl, it had the holy name on it; and could not understand why I was rather reluctant to wear it! I could tell all sorts of stories of this sort, but I won't! But you can see the principle. You want people to be able to make their offerings, especially people coming from outside, but you don't want them to disrupt and disorganize your shrine, or make it look hideous, or to make a mess, as very often happens in India: offering some flowers, but unwrapping them from pages and pages of newspaper and just flinging the newspaper down to one side. This happens in India all the time. Or removing flowers from a vase which are withered, and instead of taking them away just throwing them down on the floor. Again, it happens in India all the time. No one thinks anything of it. Not to speak of banana skins, and (laughter) ... that have been offered, and things like that. So things have to be kept under control. I am rather sensitive to this in view of my Indian experience. I think, on the whole, in this country, in the FWBO well, in India also in the FWBO we keep our shrines quite beautifully.

Chairman: The next question comes from Dharmadhara.

S.: How are we getting on with the questions, by the way?

Chairman: We are getting on quite well; we have got three to go.

Dharmadhara: Last night you mentioned, in relation to visualization practice (looking through notes) I can't find it, but you implied that you thought of the visualized image during the mantra recitation. My question is: how does that apply to a good many of the sadhanas, [where] you form an image before the mantra recitation you create it ... ?

S.: I am not sure what the context was, but the context does differ a little from one practice to another. I think the context was that, [where] you had verses to [298] recite, a litany as it were to recite, and the question was that you might succeed in visualizing the image before you had finished reciting the litany, and should you go on? I think that was the question. And I said, I think, in effect, that you would be unlikely to have visualized the image as quickly as that. But, yes, there is some difference from one sadhana to another.

Gerry: It was also in the context of the states of dhyana, that the recitation of a mantra or verse might hinder the development of dhyana.

S.: Well, yes, this is something I said: that if you were becoming very concentrated, and

beginning to become absorbed in the dhyana, you would very likely experience the recitation of the mantra, certainly the deliberate recitation of the mantra, as a distraction and a hindrance and feel like stopping it quite naturally and spontaneously.

Vessantara: Bhante, I had the impression from what you said last night that one could go further into dhyana, as it were, through contemplating a visualized image than through contemplating a mantra. Did I understand that aright?

S.: Not necessarily, no. I mentioned again, it depends on the individual, because someone may not be able to visualize as well as he is to recite the mantra. But if you recite the mantra, and if you are as it were emotionally moved by that, stirred by that, or if you visualize the image, the form and you are moved or stirred by that, the fact that you are emotionally moved will mean that a greater part of you, a greater part of your energies, are involved, are being brought together. Because of that, you are in a better state for concentration in the sense of absorption in dhyana. So the fact that you have visualized the form of a Buddha or Bodhisattva will make you more able to enter a dhyana, if you wish to do so; the fact that you have entered the dhyana, had some experience of that, will enable you to visualize more clearly and vividly if you wish to do that. And similarly, as I think I mentioned, with the development of Insight: as you develop Insight, whether with a small 'i' or a big 'I', inasmuch as your interest has been aroused and you are concentrated, you will be in a more fit state to enter into a dhyana, become absorbed. And inasmuch as you have entered into a dhyana and become absorbed, you will be better equipped, should you wish to do so, to develop Insight. So one helps the other, in a way, even though they are not, in a sense, strictly compatible.

Vessantara: I feel as though I have been going over this ground for a long time, but I don't always square up things you have said on different occasions. I perhaps need to go back over them. But how far one, technically speaking, into dhyana can go whilst visualizing, say, a yidam or whilst reciting a mantra at what point does that practice have to drop away?

S.: Well, you can visualize, in the sense of actually seeing an image before you, up even to fourth dhyana; but, by that time, you will have lost your external bodily consciousness and will visualize in a vivid dream, as it were, and will be only conscious of that particular form, that particular figure. Similarly with the mantra: you can be so absorbed in the sound of the mantra though, by the time you reach that stage, it will seem to be going on spontaneously that you may not be conscious of your surroundings, and that will amount to fourth dhyana. But there won't be any mental activity, in the ordinary sense, at such times.

Vessantara: That is clear. Because last night you gave me the impression that, even if the mantra was ... and you were listening to it, at best that would only be (you called it) a quasi-dhyanic state, and I couldn't see why one shouldn't be able to go into dhyana.

[299]

S.: I think there is a difficulty in the case of the mantra. I think you are less likely to go as deep with the mantra, possibly, as with the visualized form or figure, inasmuch as the mantra usually has an analysable meaning; so there is the possibility of your being mentally occupied with that meaning. But it is nonetheless possible to stop thinking about the meaning and be attending merely to the sound, even to the sound of the words, but without attaching any meaning to the words. It is just like you might, for instance, just see before you letters or a few words in a script that you didn't understand; so you would be concentrating, possibly, on

the script, on those particular forms; but no meaning would be attached to them, so far as you were concerned. You can even do that, with practice, with written words the meaning of which you do understand and to which you do attach a meaning. With practice, you can just look at a piece of writing, look at letters and words, without any mental activity, so that they do not have any meaning, you do not think of that meaning, but you merely see the form of the letters. So that can happen with regard to the sound of the mantra: you merely attend to the sound, and the sound does not add up to an intelligible meaning with which you are mentally occupied. That is rather more difficult than visualizing a form or a figure that you do not read, so to speak, in that way. One can try for oneself.

Dharmadhara: So, if the mantra has no analysable meaning, there is no qualitative difference between hearing the sound and visualizing the image, as far as ?

S.: No, except that you will, even if the mantra doesn't have, say, on the surface, an analysable meaning, you will have attached some meaning to it in the course of your earlier practice. But if it doesn't have an analysable meaning, obviously it is much easier, at least, just to listen internally to the sound of the mantra, without any discursive mental activity arising from it.

Tape 29, Side 1

Vessantara: We were talking last night, Bhante, about moving between states of concentration and reflection, moving back and forth between the two. In

the case of the metta bhavana, Gampopa makes the point that whilst you may start off developing metta to what you think of as all sentient beings, as time goes on you see them increasingly as processes. How far is it useful or appropriate, and if so, when, in the metta, to go from developing feeling for sentient beings whom perhaps you may start off seeing as quite real and, having built up a feeling in the practice, to then set up a subtle train of thought to the effect that they aren't really solid inherently existent beings, they are more a process? And, having developed that, to some extent, you have perhaps felt compassion for them because they see themselves as solid existing beings, to then go back to the metta and work in that way?

S.: But who are those 'they' that see themselves as solid, existing beings? One can ask oneself that, too. But, anyway, I know what you mean. One can proceed in this way, but I don't know that it is the best way. I think what would be best to do would be, if one was on retreat, say, do the metta bhavana at certain times during the day and interleave that with, say, the Six Element Practice; which would have the same sort of general effect. And something from the Six Element Practice would percolate through into the period of metta bhavana and vice versa. That would probably be a better way of approaching it. But there is another way, too; there is something else that should as it were naturally happen, which is that after you have been doing the metta bhavana for some time, in whatsoever way when I say 'for some time', I mean within a particular session of sitting you should be able to stop thinking about any particular person or persons, but at the same time be able to sit there experiencing exactly the same degree of metta that you were experiencing when you were thinking of people. So, in a way, that would [300] be metta without any object. I think it might be more useful to think in terms of developing that metta without any object, as I have called it; just metta, rather than possibly, in some cases, tying oneself into metaphysical knots by developing metta towards beings who you are also trying to convince yourself are not really there at all. So I think,

rather than trying to do that, either alternate, say, metta bhavana with, say, the Six Element Practice during the day when one is on retreat, or try to prolong the experience of metta beyond the period when you are actually thinking of anybody in particular, or directing metta towards them. I would suggest those two approaches.

Wayne: Bhante, you mentioned the people falling away from you; doesn't that naturally happen as you become more concentrated in the metta bhavana, that the people almost recede and you are just left with the pure experience of metta?

S.: Yes, I did say that; this is probably what naturally happens, especially when you have done a whole session of metta bhavana; maybe you have directed metta towards all four kinds of person, then towards all four of them equally, and then perhaps you have gone all round the world, the different quarters, or maybe gone all round the Order; by the time you have done all that, say, for 50 minutes or an hour, you should have developed a quite powerful metta, which should remain, which should persist when you stop thinking about anybody in particular. That is that, as it were, objectless metta; you are just in a state of metta without it being, at that particular time, specifically directed towards anybody. So one should perhaps even consciously aim at that. But I don't think you can do that straight off. You will have as it were to get it going with the support of reflecting on, or being aware or being mindful of, a whole series or sequence of individuals, persons.

Chairman: The last question is Dharmadhara's question.

Dharmadhara: Bhante, in the last page of ch.7, on p.97, there is a reference to someone or something called Guhyapati, and Guenther translates that as the Lord of the Mystic Teaching. Who or what is Guhyapati?

S.: Guhyapati is usually considered as a title of Vajrapani. There may be more than one Guhyapati, for all I know, but quite often Vajrapani is referred to as Guhyapati.

Dharmadhara: How can you let Guhyapati emerge from compassion?

S.: Where is that found?

Dharmadhara: Page 97, in the middle: 'Guhyapati (Lord of the Mystic Teaching), the spiritual awareness of the Omniscient One has grown out of the root of compassion.'

S.: Ah, that is to say he is a Bodhisattva and he has become a Bodhisattva through cultivating compassion. That is his root, his primary source, as it were, his origin. All these little quotes are emphasizing the virtue of compassion; so Guhyapati himself say, Vajrapani, a great Bodhisattva like that has grown out of compassion; he has become a Bodhisattva due, more than anything else, to the cultivation of compassion. That is what it means.

Dharmadhara: Can you say why he is called Guhyapati? I would translate that as 'secret' or 'hidden father'.

S.: Guhya means secret; pati is Lord or master. From the Vajrayana point of view, every Buddha family has its lord or its master. To the best of my recollection, Vajrapani is the Guhyapati, or the Pati, I think it is called the Mandalapati, of the [301] Aksobhya Buddha

family, the Vajra Buddha family. There is another text where he is mentioned. In the 108 Names of Tara, in Buddhist Texts through the Ages, is it not Vajrapani or Guhyapati who questions Avalokitesvara regarding those names?

Dharmadhara: He is referred to as 'Lord of the Guhya' guhya ... clan.

S.: Ah, yes; clan is kula; the kulapati, sorry, not mandalapati. I am not quite sure exactly what that is intended to convey; almost like a master of ceremonies, one might say. But, yes, it does seem to be Vajrapani. And the quotation is emphasizing the importance of compassion in the case of Bodhisattvas or would-be Bodhisattvas.

Chairman: Those are all the questions I have down. I think Prasannasiddhi's got a question.

Prasannasiddhi: Buddhadasa was reading a seminar today I think it was the Jewel Ornament of Liberation seminar during which you mention that benevolence and compassion are perfect when we naturally prefer the interests of others before our own. Do you think that this state is practically attainable?

S.: Say that again. (Prasannasiddhi repeats it.) Clearly the statement is made within a particular context, because one could say that that certainly is not perfect compassion, or perfect benevolence and compassion, when you prefer another's interest to your own, because there are still others; there is still yourself and others. So clearly you haven't as it were realized sunyata. But taking it, as it were, on an ordinary, mundane, matter-of-fact level, I think one can say that: that leave out the word 'perfect' but you aren't really practising benevolence and compassion unless, even on quite important, quite crucial occasions, you can genuinely prefer somebody else's interest to your own. Usually people just want their own way. They want to do what they want to do, and they want you to do what they want to do or want you to do. Maybe two people go out for a walk, and one person says, 'Let's go this way,' and the other says, 'No, let's go that way.' Maybe they both just stick to their point, and neither will give way, and an argument develops, even a quarrel; so, even in a simple situation like that sometimes you have difficulties. Even at Council meetings of the FWBO sometimes quite heated arguments develop as to whether we should do it at 2 o'clock or 2.15 or whatever it happens to be; people can sometimes stick to their point. So, even in these simple matters, one should train oneself to prefer the other person's interest, even; or give way to the other person's preference, when it is a quite simple matter; it doesn't really matter much either way. Very often people just want to assert their preference, their way of doing things, even though it doesn't really make any practical difference. But, after schooling yourself a little in this way, you have to learn to prefer somebody else's interest even in some matter which is of importance to you. If you are really devoted to your friend you may even be quite prepared to give up your girl friend to him if he happens to want her. That is a real sign of friendship! Or even your favourite record that you are very attached to, or whatever it may be. Or you may be ready to give up a holiday that you have been looking forward to, to help your friend maybe move house, or something of that sort. These are all quite simple practical examples. So unless you are able to prefer the other person's interests to your own where necessary, and almost make a regular practice or habit of it I won't say your benevolence and compassion aren't perfect, but they are certainly not very well developed, and you still have a lot of work left to do. It is easy enough not that it is all that easy, but it is relatively easy to go along with the other person's wishes where they don't affect your own [302] interests very substantially; but it is a real sign of friendship and a sign of real benevolence and compassion when you can

prefer the other person's interests even when they clash with quite dearly prized interests of your own.

Prasannasiddhi: I suppose I was taking this as a state of mind where you continually, without stopping, just thought of others first, but you still have ... preferences.

S.: Yes; if you get into the habit, if that is your habitual state of mind, perhaps it couldn't be called perfect, for the reasons I mentioned at the beginning, not strictly, but you would perhaps be well on the way to becoming perfect. But, in the case of the vast majority of people, they are far from being in that state of mind habitually. They find it very difficult even to prefer someone else's interests or give way to somebody else's preferences, even in very small and relatively unimportant matters. So most people have got quite a lot of work to do in this area before anything like benevolence and compassion can really arise. It is easy enough, relatively speaking, to do it when you are sitting on your cushion, but to carry it out in practice is very much more difficult just to give way to someone else's preference, or even prefer someone else's interest to your own.

Wayne: Would you say this aspect of preferring somebody's interest to your own was an example of the Bodhisattva principle at work on the mundane level?

S.: Oh yes, inasmuch as benevolence and compassion are integral parts of the Bodhisattva ideal; indeed, yes.

Dhammarati: Coming back to Council meetings and that kind of thing, I can think of a couple of quite senior Order Members who are very forceful and very decisive, and it seems partly because of that that they ... school themselves to prefer my interest to theirs.

S.: But what does one mean by one's own interests? Supposing a certain Order Member of the kind you describe, in that sort of situation, is insisting on a certain course of action; presumably it is not simply because he prefers that personally for quite subjective reasons, but because he is convinced that that is the best course of action for the Centre or whatever it is he happens to be concerned with? That may or may not always be the case; well, that will have to be thrashed out in discussion. But I think that is a rather different thing from just preferring your own way. But it may happen in a Council meeting or whatever that it does become obvious someone is just insisting on things being done in a certain way because he has made that particular suggestion, or prefers things being done in that way, and it may not really be the best way. Well, that has to be thrashed out in discussion. But supposing you really and truly do see what is the best way of doing something, and then somebody else makes a really foolish suggestion; what I have just said does not mean that you should at once give up your sensible idea and prefer his foolish idea. Please don't take me as literally as that. You are both presumably concerned with the interests of the Centre, say; it is that that has to be considered, and that that has to be thrashed out, perhaps, until you come to an agreement as to what the interest of the Centre really is. But I think people need to look at themselves really carefully, and see how, in the vast majority of cases, they really do want to get or to have their own way, and try to get their own way in all sorts of ways, direct and indirect, honest and dishonest, conscious and unconscious. Some people are very good at getting their own way, very clever. You hardly realize that they made you go along their way, but they manage it! Some of them may preface their remarks by saying: 'I don't want to influence you in any way, I want you to do just what you want to do, but'!

[303]

Hugh: Bhante, I was just thinking that if one took this up as a practice one might well end up preferring someone else's way with a grudging sort of feeling at doing things like that. Would it be preferable to then work on your grudging feeling, or to try and work from a genuine feeling of preferring someone else's interests?

S.: I think you have to tackle the problem from both ends at once. Otherwise, if you are going to wait for the perfect motive, so to speak, for doing something, you are going to wait for ever. I think sometimes you have to force yourself a little bit, and that does have its effect on your mental state or motivation; but not too much, obviously; otherwise you will end up, if you are not careful, full of resentment instead of benevolence and compassion. One mustn't be too precious about it. Don't be so careful about your motives for doing something good, or so scrupulous, that you never actually get around to doing something good. Right-ho, we are ending on that note, then.

[304]

Tape 30, Side 1

(Ignore preliminary conversation)

Chairman: Tonight we come to the questions and answers on ch.8, 'Taking Refuge'. The first question is from Jarmo.

S.: Ah, before we have the first question I am just going to make one observation, which may seem pretty obvious, but I will make it nonetheless: that is to say, an observation on the fact that Guenther translates the Tibetan, based on the Sanskrit, phrase as 'Taking Refuge'. I don't know whether that was remarked on in the course of study, but it does seem really extraordinary, especially in the case of a scholarly person like Dr Guenther; because the Sanskrit is most clearly and definitely 'Going for Refuge', not 'Taking', and the connotations of the two expressions, the two verbs, are quite different. So I think, even if we do encounter 'Taking Refuge' in the text we should definitely think in terms of 'Going for Refuge', because that is what we say when we 'take' the Refuges. 'To the Buddha for refuge I go,' gacchami.

Gerry: Following on from that, Bhante, how does that tie in with when you ask for the Refuges in the ordination ceremony? You say 'Give the Refuges to me,' as if you could take them.

S.: Yes, if you ask for something though again, I suppose, depending on how you ask for it it almost suggests something to be given, and therefore something to be taken. In the case of the robes, when one is ordained as, say, a bhikshu or samanera, that is definitely the case: you 'ask for the robes,' because the robes are a tangible thing that can be handed over and which you can put on. But, strictly speaking, you don't really 'take' the Refuges from anybody; you recite them after somebody not that something passes from [him to you], in the strict sense, but more in the sense that, as he repeats you repeat; in other words, you follow in his footsteps, you affiliate yourself to the spiritual tradition to which he is affiliated by Going for Refuge in the same way that he Goes for Refuge; not that you take anything from him certainly not the Refuges.

Gerry: Am I right in thinking that the wording of the ordination ceremony says 'Give me the

Refuges', Bhante?

S.: Yes, it does. That is traditional; but nonetheless it isn't to be taken literally, quite clearly. Perhaps even one should think in terms of modifying that phraseology. It is not so much giving; it is more showing the way, taking the lead, as it were.

Chairman: The first question tonight is from Jarmo.

Jarmo: On p.101, when talking about the object of Refuge, Gampopa emphasizes the Buddha Refuge by saying that 'In the ultimate sense, the refuge for the world is Buddha(hood) alone.' I would like to know why the emphasis is so strongly on the Buddha Refuge, and what are the implications for us?

S.: In a way, I am not sure why the emphasis is so strongly on the Buddha Refuge. In a sense, it could just as easily be on the Dharma Refuge. Sometimes it is said that the Dharma Refuge depends on the Buddha Refuge, because after all it is the Buddha who has taught the Dharma, so that the Dharma comes from the Buddha. But if one looks at the matter in this way, it means that one is understanding the term 'Dharma' in only one of its various senses. The word dharma has a number of [305] senses, so certainly the teaching of the Buddha, the teaching given by the Buddha, is one of those meanings. But there is a much broader, a much deeper, sense of the term, meaning something like the cosmic spiritual law. The Buddha, according to the Pali Canon, immediately after his Enlightenment, reflected: 'I have realized this law, this Dharma'; so here Dharma doesn't mean the teaching of the Buddha, but that law, that spiritual principle by conforming himself to which or by realizing which the Buddha has become the Buddha, has become Enlightened. So if one takes the term Dharma in one sense as the teaching of the Buddha, well, yes, the Dharma comes from the Buddha; but if one takes the term Dharma in the other sense as meaning that cosmic spiritual law or principle, the Buddha at least, in a manner of speaking comes from the Dharma. So it depends on the meaning you attach to Buddha, and even on the meaning you attach to Dharma, whether Buddha comes from Dharma or Dharma comes from Buddha. In many of the Mahayana texts, Buddha no longer means simply the Enlightened human teacher but the universal principle of Buddhahood, or even Reality itself. So if you take Dharma in the primary sense and Buddha in the secondary sense, Buddha comes from Dharma; but if you take Buddha in the primary sense and Dharma in the secondary sense, Dharma comes from Buddha. So, according to how you take these terms, according to which of them you take in the primary and which in the secondary sense, the ultimate Refuge, one might say, is either the Buddha or the Dharma. So Gampopa is able to say that the Buddha is the ultimate Refuge because he apparently takes 'Buddha' in the primary sense of the term and Dharma in the secondary sense of the term; but we need not do that. Nonetheless, there must be a reason why Gampopa takes, as he apparently does, Buddha in the primary sense or ultimate sense and Dharma in the secondary sense; presumably it is because a person, a concrete person, so to speak, appeals to us more strongly, and therefore perhaps is a more appropriate object for our Going for Refuge in a deeper sense than an apparently abstract principle or law. That is the only explanation that I can think of.

Chairman: The second question is from Kevin on the cosmic Going for Refuge.

Kevin: On one of the taped lectures, 'Going for Refuge,' I think it was called, you enumerate six levels of Going for Refuge, and these are the ethnic, the provisional, the effective, the real,

the absolute and, lastly, the cosmic Going for Refuge. How do you see the whole of the cosmos as continually Going for Refuge, and does this include inanimate matter and, if so, how is this possible?

S.: When I speak, or spoke, of the cosmic Going for Refuge which I did as it were in a rash moment (laughter) I don't so much think in terms of a sort of collective Going for Refuge on the part of the whole cosmos. I am thinking more in terms of the fact that one might say that everything in the cosmos, every individual thing, has so to speak an inbuilt tendency to transcend itself, or at least that there is the possibility of it transcending itself, given the right circumstances and given the right conditions. As to whether that applies to inanimate things, I think one can say that it does in the sense that it is in dependence on inanimate things that animate things arise. So that you could say that inanimate things possess the capacity, so to speak, the potential, so to speak, of becoming animate things; and in that sense possess the capacity to transcend themselves; and in that sense, again, or to that extent, even, in a manner of speaking, Go for Refuge. It was along those sort of lines that I was thinking, though I wasn't so much making an objectively scientifically verifiable statement so much as speaking in what one can only describe as more poetic and metaphorical terms. But, yes, one does have this conception in some of the Mahayana sutras; maybe not expressed quite in those terms, but amounting to that, one might say.

Kevin: This would support the vitalistic view?

[306]

S.: I didn't have that in mind at that time, because in a way this far transcends the level of vitalism as historically understood in the West. But, yes, in the case of vitalism there is the suggestion that, in these terms, things have a tendency to transcend themselves. But one can't explain living phenomena in purely mechanical or mechanistic terms.

Kevin: If I can add a little more to this. I was thinking that this view of the cosmos being seen as quite dynamic and upward-moving seems to contrast with the more traditional view which sees the various levels of existence, such as the realms of animals and gods, as being very static. It seems that the beings in those realms seem to be serving out a term of karma vipaka and do not seem to be transcending themselves; they just seem to be quite static, whereas

S.: But they transcend themselves in the long run; in the long run, the possibility of transcending that state is there. In fact, they have got to leave that state anyway sooner or later. The fact that they are in it a long time doesn't in itself invalidate the general principle of self-transcendence. You might be a god for millions and millions of years, but you possess nonetheless the possibility of transcending that state, however delayed. The amoeba, one might say, possessed the potential of becoming a human being, but that potential was not actualized for millions upon millions of years.

Mike: I am very confused. You are saying that inanimate things can become animate. Does that mean that something that doesn't have consciousness can develop consciousness?

S.: This is a semantic difficulty merely. In a sense, one might say, strictly speaking, one thing never becomes another. This is why it is safer to stick to the phraseology which I did also use: 'In dependence on A, B arises.' I said originally: 'In dependence upon an inanimate being, an animate being arises.' If one speaks, and understands the expression literally, in terms of an

inanimate being becoming an animate being, one lands oneself in all sorts of logical difficulties. It is not that you have an individual amoeba, and that individual amoeba becomes an individual human being. Do you see what I mean? But one means that in dependence upon the amoeba arises another creature which is a bit less like an amoeba and a little bit more like something else, and in dependence on that arises another form of life which is even less like the amoeba and even more like the something else; neither the same nor different. And this process goes on and on and on and on, for millions of years, and the end result is that in dependence upon what that amoeba though not that individual amoeba in the literal sense has 'become' you get a human being arising. But I think you have to envisage the process as being very much one in the course of which, in dependence on A, B arises. Otherwise you are as it were mentally thinking of an

individual amoeba remaining the same amoeba but somehow becoming a human being, while remaining an amoeba, which isn't the case at all. So it is basically a semantic difficulty.

Mike: ..., are we talking about something which doesn't have life developing life something inanimate becoming animate?

S.: Again, it is the same semantic difficulty. It is not that something which doesn't have life proceeds to develop in such a way that it, the same unchanging being that you started from, now has life instead of not having life. It is in dependence upon the being that doesn't have life, so to speak, there arises a being which does have life. If you think in terms of continuity in the absolute sense, or if you think in terms of non-continuity, discreteness, in the absolute sense, you always encounter logical difficulties. It is more that we take conventions of speech to represent realities, which in fact they don't; they are only a sort of shorthand which can't be taken literally. You might say, for instance, to take another example, a good man becomes bad; but how can a good man be bad? Or how [307] can a bad man be good? So when you say a good man becomes bad or a bad man becomes good, you are unconsciously thinking in terms of, say, the bad man, while remaining a bad man because it is he who becomes good becomes good; which is not the case, it is [that], dependent on the fact of somebody's badness, arises the fact of somebody's goodness; not that the bad man in the literal sense becomes good or the good man in the literal sense becomes bad. Otherwise you are confronted with one or other of two logical difficulties: either that you have got two different persons, so one cannot become the other, or that you have got one person, in which case no change really takes place. So either the one doesn't become the other or it cannot become the other. So it is better to stick to the formula: 'In dependence upon A, B arises.'

Mike: Well, can you explain how an animate being arises in dependence on ?

S.: If one asks the question in the sense of asking how does the one become the other, well, no, because it is in order to avoid speaking in terms of the one becoming the other that one uses the expression 'in dependence upon A, B arises' to signify the fact that there is neither complete continuity in the sense of no change, nor complete discontinuity in the sense of one completely different thing succeeding another. Gerry(?): Some would say you are sidestepping the issue by not saying how it actually arises. You just use

S.: No; I am only refusing to use the linguistic conventions which, when taken literally, give rise to the problem. So I am using, if you like, another linguistic convention which we are not so familiar with and which there is less likelihood, therefore, of our taking literally; and

which, therefore, is more able to communicate the meaning here. It is almost like asking someone 'Have you stopped beating your mother?' and you say 'Well, I haven't started beating her,' and they say, 'Ah, you are sidestepping the question!' Perhaps it requires reflection on this, because we are not used to thinking in that way 'in dependence upon A, B arises.' Perhaps we should just reflect on it a bit more. This whole question of one thing 'becoming' another, taken literally, is fraught with difficulties, fraught with logical absurdities. In traditional Buddhist language, there is a becoming, but there is no one, or no thing, that becomes; that is another way of looking at it. If you think in terms of some thing becoming another, yes, you land yourself in the logical difficulties of which I spoke, but if you speak just in terms of becoming by which you mean well, what does one mean? one means neither being nor not being, neither continuity of being nor succession of being by not-being, but something in between the two, if one thinks in terms of becoming, where there is not anything that becomes. With an effort of imagination you could probably avoid these sort of difficulties. We can say it is only really a question of how you put it, because we see the thing happening; we see, as it were, in a manner of speaking, one thing becoming another, or A arising in dependence on B, or B arising in dependence on A. We see, for instance, a bud and then we see a flower; so the fact is unmistakable. But we just have to be careful how we describe it, because if we describe it in a certain way, and take the description literally, we land ourselves in logical difficulties.

Mike: Is it a case when an inanimate object becomes animate (laughter)

: Becomes?

Mike: No ...s to an animate object; is that I am confused with consciousness, where consciousness comes into it. Is it that some already existing consciousness sort of enters into -

[308]

S.: Yes no, I see what you you are just involved in the same semantic difficulty: that, in order to manifest it has got to already, in a sense, be there. But that is as it were only in a manner of speaking. If you say that that human being is potentially a Buddha, or a bud is potentially a flower, if you are not careful you think somehow in terms of the Buddha lurking within the human being, the flower lurking within the bud; and when the human being 'becomes' the Buddha or the bud 'becomes' the flower it is a matter of the hidden Buddha or the hidden flower sort of coming out as it were from inside and being revealed; but actually it isn't like that at all. But if we take our conventional expressions literally, that is how we will start thinking. So it is again a question of 'in dependence upon A, B arises.' Perhaps we will have to hammer it out in the smaller discussion groups. Different people may look at it in different ways.

Chairman: I think each of your statements is giving rise to two further questions; there is a queue of people waiting. Prasannasiddhi first.

Prasannasiddhi: I found this quite interesting, Bhante. I was wondering what sort of objects or things were on the highest scale of inanimate objects, and what beings or things were on the lowest scale of the animate objects, so that we could compare.

S.: Are you thinking in terms of as it were borderline cases?

Prasannasiddhi: Yes.

S.: I was reading something the other day to the effect that bacteria are sometimes classified as living by certain people for certain purposes, but classified by others for other purposes, apparently, as not living. Then there is the case of the mushroom, a bit further up the scale, which is classified by some, or some cultures, as a vegetable and others as an animal. In India, vegetarians will not eat mushrooms; they regard them as so to speak animals. We regard them, don't we, as vegetables? But they are, I believe without being a biologist in a sense, at least, somewhere in between, possibly. I don't know if we have a biologist on the premises? But I am just giving it as an example of something generally regarded as constituting an intermediate species.

Prasannasiddhi: Very sort of slimy substances.

S.: I think one just needs to look at a good textbook of biology; I think that would give you a number of such somewhat indeterminate species. Well, in the case of human beings you can have beings intermediate between male and female. If you regard either the male as superior to the female or the female as superior to the male, the intermediate type will be intermediate in an evolutionary sense also. But, yes, this is a bit of a puzzle, I think, for people who have to classify living things and as it were non-living things, to arrange them in a proper graded hierarchy, in a proper family tree. It is very difficult, sometimes, to tell where, so to speak, the old species ends and the new species begins. There are many problems of classification, I believe, in biology, of this sort.

Wayne: You mentioned that people get caught in linguistic conventions; and then you said that logically it doesn't follow. Isn't logic also a linguistic convention? Does it approximate closer to reality than other linguistic conventions?

S.: If you take logic in the traditional sense, especially in the sense of deductive logic, yes: it is based on linguistic conventions. It is, so to speak, a rationalization of linguistic conventions. For instance, that you say something like to give the classical example 'Socrates is a man.' Here you have your subject, Socrates, your predicate, 'man,' and the copular 'is'. That is the traditional logical analysis. But there are some languages which are not [309] constructed in that way, especially, I believe, some African languages; in a sense, their experience of reality is different. So it has been argued by some that Western traditional logic represents a rationalization on the part of Aristotle of the structure of the Greek language. So, yes, one can certainly say that. So if logic itself is not to be taken literally not to speak of the illogical! But we can look at and analyse all sorts of statements that we ourselves make, and see that they cannot be taken literally. If they are taken literally, they don't as it were make sense. If you say, for instance, something like 'The man is walking'; do we really see the walking separately from the man? We see the man; we really ought to join the two, the noun and the verb, and make one word: 'man-walking'. That is what we see; we see man-walking. We don't see 'a man' (separate, full stop) 'walking' (separate, full stop). Not that we see the man and then we see the walking; we see the two at the same time, we see 'man-walking'. But our linguistic structure has broken up those two things, at least in theory. We separate the man from the walking; the man from the man's walking. But, actually, there is only 'man-walking'. In the same way, we say 'The tree is green,' but do we see the green separately from the tree? Do we first of all see the tree, and then stick on to it the concept or the percept of greenness? No, we see 'green-tree,' in one word, as it were. We see, for instance, 'the green

tree waving in the breeze.' No, we don't see it like that; we see, one might say, 'green-tree-breeze-in-waving', all one word. Yes; that is our actual experience, but we split it up for certain practical purposes, purposes of logical analysis, semantic analysis, and so on. But then we tend to start thinking that actually in reality, the tree and the greenness, the fact that the branches are waving in the wind, are all different things, which we then proceed to stick together or join together; so then we need something with which to stick them together and join them together, so then we posit some sort of entity standing behind them holding them all together, which constitutes the essence of that particular object, and that is what we call the atman! do you see what I mean? or the svabhava, the own-being; which, according to Buddhism at least, is purely fictitious. So, yes, the study of language is quite interesting. You can perhaps begin to see why I prefer to at least try to use language poetically rather than as it were scientifically or logically. : Bhante, how deeply are we conditioned by the actual language that we use in our experience of reality?

S.: I think we can say that our experience of reality is conditioned by our language inasmuch as our language originally was conditioned by our experience of reality. There is an Indian school of as it were linguistic philosophy, you might say, which reduces all the words of the Sanskrit language to a very limited number I think it is about 120 of verbal roots, which represent absolutely basic aspects of man's total experience of the universe. I think the study of words in that sense, tracing them back and back to deeper and deeper meanings, and therefore more and more basic perceptions of the universe, is quite interesting. In modern times, a philosopher who has devoted quite a lot of attention to this aspect of the question is Heidegger, especially in connection with the Greek language and Greek philosophy, and German poetry. But he is quite difficult. It is very interesting, because he is very, very acutely aware of the fact that our perception of reality is affected by the language we use, and he tries to use, sometimes, it seems, language in such a way that you are not misled by it. But it is a very, very great effort to use language in such a way that you are not misled by the assumptions on which that language apparently rests. I think it can really be done only by a poetical use of language. But I think if you use language in any other way you can have some idea of what you should not be doing, or what language is not communicating, but not much idea of what you should be doing or of what language is communicating or is able to communicate or capable of communicating. So a lot of the questions people ask are actually quite artificial questions. [310] This is one of the virtues of the modern analytical philosophy: it does show that many even traditional problems of philosophy are simply based on linguistic confusion, semantic confusion, misunderstanding.

: Gerry, do you have a point?

Gerry: ... It's not something to do with this particular area.

Kevin: I am not sure if this is still a semantically confused question. Just going back to consciousness and inanimate matter: can we say that consciousness exists outside of inanimate matter or within it, or does inanimate matter just have the potential for consciousness ...?

S.: We did touch on this some evenings ago, when I referred to the Surangama Sutra and the Buddha's dialogue with Ananda. Do you remember? And the Buddha tried to demonstrate to Ananda that consciousness was not to be thought of as located within the body, outside the body, or somewhere in between, or on the surface of the body, or lurking within the eye, and

so on. Consciousness, by definition, as it were, is not a spatial thing; so how can you really speak of it as though it had a spatial relation with the body? You should be able, in a way, to see the answer to this yourselves, because (a) you have a body, which seems to occupy space, and (b) you have a consciousness. Just look and see how the two are related. The materials are there to hand. Take a look and say 'Here is my mind, my consciousness. Is it in my body? Or if it isn't in, is it outside my body? Or both? Or neither? Or just in between? Or on the surface? Where is it?' Well, you ought to be able to see, because you have got both. This is what you should be doing, really, instead of asking me. You have got no better equipment than I have [I have... than you have], and I am in no better position to answer the question than you are. So what is the relation between consciousness and body? All one has to do is just stop and look and see, and make a simple, factual observation. Actually, it turns out to be a sort of koan, but that is another matter. (Laughter.) You have to ask yourself also well, question your assumptions, because first of all you are positing a body, then you are positing consciousness, and then you are trying to work out how the two are related, and whether the one is inside the other or not. So if you get into difficulties, you can ask yourself: do I actually see a body and a consciousness? What is my experience? In other words, question your assumptions. Are there really two things that you then have to proceed to relate to? If there are not, what do you have, instead of a body and a consciousness? Again, one just needs to look at, to examine, to analyse one's own experience. Do a little homework.

Dhammarati: There is something that you said earlier, Bhante, that I can't quite square with my experience, when you were talking about rebirth, and you talked about the finding of our souls; and you talked about the possibility of human bodies being born and later somehow souls entering into them, and you also mentioned the possibility of bodies as it were without souls; and that doesn't quite square with my experience of my relationship to consciousness and my body. Could you comment on this? ...

S.: One can certainly speak of the consciousness as separate from the body, because certainly one does have an experience sometimes well, usually of consciousness as being bound up with the body. But, on the other hand, one does sometimes have the experience of consciousness as it were apart from the body. Again, one can question the questioning of the assumptions, even, if one wants to go as far as that, and say, well, yes, don't we experience a body and a consciousness? Aren't the two distinct? Here is my body; and then, leaving that aside, well, there is something which I can identify as consciousness, which is quite independent of the body, and which one can certainly imagine existing independently. So what is the actual question?

[311]

Dhammarati: I suppose the difficulty for me is that there is definitely some kind of connection between the two, and my consciousness is in some relationship to the complexity of the emphasis on the quality of my interaction with the environment and so on. And I suppose I find it hard to understand how a human body has enough of whatever kind of impulse is behind it to organize this very complex nervous system; it would then have a very rich sensual experience, in some sense, know how the potential for self-consciousness that somehow would have a soul that ... soul ...this ...ly independent organism ... self-consciousness.

S.: Ah. But here perhaps you have been taking a certain expression literally; because one speaks, for instance one perhaps can't help speaking of consciousness coming into the body.

But consciousness can't come into the body; consciousness can't 'come' from anywhere, because that is a spatial terminology, and if consciousness is not in space, if consciousness is something non-spatial, consciousness cannot come and it cannot go. So if one speaks of consciousnesses coming from other worlds and other universes, clearly that cannot possibly be taken literally. Perhaps it is difficult to phrase in any other way though perhaps one could do, if one tried but certainly that particular mode of expression can't be taken literally. Again, perhaps, it is safest to fall back on 'in dependence upon A, B arises.'

Tape 30, Side 2

But one isn't to think literally of disembodied consciousnesses arriving like meteors from some other world.

Dhammarati: When you were presenting the other problem ... conscious body there wasn't disembodied consciousness; it was like bodies wandering around without a degree of consciousness; but there was this thing you called a soul. Can you have this organism with its interaction with its environment without any degree of consciousness?

S.: One has, for instance, a stone which doesn't appear to possess consciousness in the way that a human being has; but presumably it possesses the potentiality of consciousness in the sense that in dependence upon the inanimate including the stone, one might say the animate, including the human consciousness, arises. So, in that sense, in a manner of speaking, the potentiality of consciousness is in the stone. But, of course, one mustn't take that little preposition 'in' literally; otherwise you sort of spatialize the non-spatial.

Dhammarati: Would you take literally this idea of the finite number of souls?

S.: I wouldn't take literally any expression [in] human language (laughter). It is impossible. I think you can take literally only a statement that is not meant to be taken literally! The only thing you can take literally is poetry, is myth. Science, you might say, has to be taken poetically! So you could be very extreme and perhaps, just since you are coming to the end of this series, I will be a bit extreme and say the scientific is, almost by definition, the untruthful, and poetry, almost by definition, is the truthful. Which really sets the cat among the pigeons! That doesn't mean that science doesn't work: it works all right, but I am only disputing that science, in the sense of scientific theories, are literally true in the ultimate sense.

Dhammarati: So does this idea of a finite number of souls in any way, on its own level, in its appropriate sphere, have any relationship with what actually goes on? (Laughter.)

[312]

S.: Yes, if you can express it in a manner sufficiently poetical to actually communicate the truth that that statement is capable of embodying! In other words, all statements are really pseudo-statements, and one is to take as it were the spirit of them, not take them literally. For instance, if you look at the matter closely, you see that all the words that we use, all the expressions that we use, are derived from, for want of a better term, our sense experience, our experience within space and time, through our senses. But we apply that empirically derived language to non-empirical matters. For instance, we talk of one idea depending on another; so what does 'depending' mean? It means 'hanging from'. So how can an idea hang from another idea? So clearly you can't take the expression 'depending' literally; so in what sense are you to

take it? Well, you can only take it, as it were, poetically, and try to grasp, in a sense intuitively, what it means when one speaks of one idea depending on another idea; because, when you speak of an idea depending on another idea, you don't mean the same thing that you mean when you speak, say, of one link of a chain depending on another link of the chain.

Chairman: The next person Vessantara.

Vessantara: Oh, it's so long ago and we have come so far, I'll leave it.

Bram: I wanted to say something from a scientific point of view, but I think it is a bit dangerous ground, now. But when you mentioned several examples of borderline cases between the animate and the inanimate, one thing that came into my mind was the viruses, which, under some conditions, have all the characteristics of living beings, and under other conditions are perfectly dead crystals. And man can change the conditions in such a way that that material becomes live material, and

S.: That is a very interesting point, because it shows that it is not so much that you have a living thing or a dead thing, but that in dependence on such-and-such conditions life arises, and in dependence on another set of conditions life does not arise.

Bram: When life arises, does it also mean that consciousness arises?

S.: (pause) When life arises, consciousness arises? Apparently, looking at it in a common-sense way, not always; because, for instance, we usually say that a plant has life but we don't usually speak of a plant as having consciousness though some people, more recently, have started to do that. It depends, no doubt, on how you define consciousness. I doubt if anyone would maintain that a plant possesses reflexive consciousness. Clearly, there are as it were degrees: there are degrees of life, and presumably, therefore, degrees of consciousness.

Bram: You have said that there is the becoming but there is nothing that becomes?

S.: Mm.

Bram: Is there an analogy that there is an arising but there is nothing that arises, or is that a wrong ?

S.: Yes, there is an analogy if you emphasize 'thing': there is an arising, but no thing that is to say, no fixed, permanent, unchanging thing that arises. The arising also is a process. I think I have gone into this in a general way somewhere at the beginning of the Survey, haven't I? And also in an essay in Crossing the Stream. It is really very basic Buddhism.

Gerry: If this discussion has finished this may be an obvious question, but Kevin mentioned your lecture on 'Going for Refuge'. Is Gampopa talking about effective Going for Refuge in this chapter?

[313]

S.: He doesn't seem to make that sort of distinction. I take it that he is talking, at least to begin with, about what we would call provisional Going for Refuge and provisional arising of the Bodhicitta.

Chairman: [We should stay with] the points connected with the discussion. Pavel.

Pavel: Bhante, the problem with consciousness is also important for rebirth. If we think about matter, about the mass of the human body, it is preserved, we can make mass balance and the mass after death surrender ... becomes ashes and gas and it is exactly the same as it was before. The heat is also preserved, the heat is lost in the ... environment. But consciousness is something different; it is actually a process which depends on the structure, so it cannot be preserved. For example, this house, this building, has something from the consciousness of the architect, but if you destroy it it is just a heap of stones and nothing from the original, beautiful structure of the building is preserved. But rebirth actually means that something of the consciousness comes to another human being which is reborn;

S.: Comes? One can't help using that expression, but again one mustn't take it literally, because consciousness, being non-spatial, neither comes nor goes. But if one does take it literally, all sorts of problems arise, and I suspect that it is one of those problems that is going to arise now! Do you see what I mean?

Pavel: Not exactly.

S.: Well, if one starts with the idea of a consciousness that 'comes and goes,' already one in a sense is falsifying the notion of consciousness, because consciousness is non-spatial; it doesn't occupy space. So, yes, it doesn't come and it doesn't go. So if one proceeds to ask a question in such terms as 'when consciousness goes,' or 'if consciousness goes,' then one must be very careful that one is not basing one's question on a literal understanding of that expression. Because, one might say, the body disintegrates, but from the point of view of the consciousness, in a sense nothing happens. One could, with caution, use the expression that the consciousness is disconnected from the body though, of course, that might raise, if one isn't careful, all sorts of questions: exactly how is it connected? at what point is it connected? and so on. But if nonetheless one cautiously uses the expression 'consciousness becomes disconnected from the body,' one can understand that the body may drop off and may disintegrate, but in a sense, from the standpoint of consciousness itself, nothing has happened. And certainly the consciousness doesn't 'go' anywhere.

Pavel: But it can disappear.

S.: Its existence can cease to be inferred. I very nearly said 'can cease to be perceived,' but that wouldn't have been quite right; its existence ceases to be inferred; because you never actually see somebody else's consciousness, you only infer its existence from what you know about the relation of your own consciousness, so to speak, to your own body. You never actually see somebody else's consciousness well, you might have done; I personally haven't. I see your bodies, but I don't see your consciousness. I infer the existence of consciousnesses behind your bodies, because that is my own experience; I experience my own consciousness, in a manner of speaking, within my body, and not accessible to you, not directly accessible to you. This is really quite a mystery, this whole question of the relationship between body and mind, mind and body. The Theravada view, of course, is that mind depends upon body and body depends upon mind. They leave it just at that.

Pavel: But there are things that I can see; for example, I can see the discarded {figures ... if I burn the carpet, so this organization of colours and shapes [314] absolutely disappears; they

will never be reborn, actually. It disappears, it is no longer here, because it is just fluxion.

S.: Oh yes, to come back to a point you made, it is not the Buddhist view that the consciousness is simply a particular structure of the body or that the term consciousness merely represents the arrangement of material factors in a particular way. That is not the Buddhist view.

Pavel: That actually is in things we see connected with a certain complex biological structure, ... simple things.

S.: We can infer that the bodily things that we say we perceive are connected with a consciousness, in the same way that our own consciousness, which we experience personally, is connected with our own body. But we never perceive anybody's consciousness. We only infer the existence of it, except perhaps in supernormal states, we can directly perceive; but normally we don't, we just infer that it is there. We reason it out. We only perceive directly, as it were, our own consciousness. So where does that leave us, or where does that leave the question? (Pause.) I think what we mainly have to realize is that most of the time we are actually misled by words. We use words in a quite satisfactory way for ordinary practical purposes: if I say 'Please pass the salt,' or whatever, there is no difficulty at all; we understand exactly what is meant, we act accordingly, and the request is met. But when we start applying that same language to questions of what we call reality, then we come up against all sorts of difficulties. So we have to be aware of the limitations of language, and be aware more of what we are trying to do with language; say, when we discuss philosophical questions. Some of them, at least, it seems, can just be reduced to what I call semantic difficulties. I don't think all of them [can]; it would be rather sad if that were the case. I therefore, in a way, plead for a greater, more vivid realization of the poetic nature of speech. I used to discuss this with some of my rather literal-minded Nepali students in Kalimpong; I think I have done it in this country, too. Take that first line of Shelley's Ode to the Skylark

Hail to thee, blithe spirit,
Bird thou never wert.

So Shelley is saying, addressing the skylark, 'You were never a bird.' But does Shelley mean that to be taken literally? The ornithologists would certainly raise a protest: 'The skylark not a bird? If the skylark isn't a bird, please tell me what on earth it is! It's not a human being, it's not an elephant, or an ant. What does Shelley mean by saying a skylark is not a bird, and never was a bird! How ridiculous! He knows nothing about ornithology whatever!' So, if you take Shelley's statement literally, or scientifically, yes, it's nonsense; but what does he really mean when he says to the skylark: 'Hail to thee, blithe spirit'? leave aside the 'blithe spirit' bit, that was borrowed by Noel Coward, I think, as the title of some blessed little operetta [play]; leave that aside 'Bird thou never wert' you were never a bird. It is an illusion that you are a bird. So clearly, Shelley is taking the skylark, without it ceasing to be a skylark, just as a symbol, to put it very crudely, of something else, and by saying that the skylark was never a bird, he is trying to awaken in the reader some sense of what it is the skylark, for him, represents or symbolizes. But you can't take that statement literally. So I think this ought to be our approach to language all the time, because language, as applied to non-material realities, is essentially metaphorical, poetry rather than prose. In the case of the classes I used to take in Kalimpong for Matric and I.A. students, they had to paraphrase these unfortunate poems, and they had to paraphrase, for [315] the benefit of the examiner I have touched on this in my

Memoirs, by the way they had to paraphrase 'Hail to thee, blithe spirit,' as the poet addressing a bird called the skylark as a cheerful bird that is not in fact a bird at all! (Laughter.) This was the paraphrase, you see, to satisfy the examiner that he understood the meaning of the poem! This is what examinations do to poetry. So I became aware of this when I had to dictate these paraphrases which students could write out when they encountered the question the question gave these verses To the Skylark and said: 'Explain in your own words.' Well, this was what was required: you explained it in that way, as a prose paragraph to show that you had understood the meaning. But you had understood the meaning in a purely prosaic way, and you could have had, perhaps, not the remotest glimpse of the poetry at all. But presumably the examiner didn't bother about that. Because, after all, you weren't going to have anything to do with poetry in your future life and career; you were probably going to get a job as a clerk in an office somewhere, so all you needed was prose, not poetry, for that purpose. Anyway, that's a digression. We'd better pass on, otherwise we will be here all night.

Chairman: The last part ... OK.

S.: How are we going with the questions?

Chairman: That's got to the end of the second page(?) questions. Prakasha's question now, on fidelity.

Prakasha: What is the relationship between fidelity and Going for Refuge? It seems to me there is a very strong connection between fidelity and commitment. One can talk about fidelity to one's practice and to one's friends. In that case, how are they similar and how are they different?

S.: Yes. Fidelity and commitment are very closely connected. I must say I haven't as yet systematically worked out the exact nature of the commitment. I would say, just at a hazard, that fidelity represents persistence in a commitment. You initially make a commitment, as when you Go for Refuge or, say, when you get married; and then your fidelity consists in persistence in that commitment, being true to that commitment, or, again, being faithful to that commitment. So I think one can't really speak in terms of fidelity unless there is an actual commitment, a definite act or decision as the starting point of the fidelity. In other words, you don't just happen to be faithful. If you just happen to be faithful, you aren't faithful. Fidelity depends upon a prior commitment to be faithful, or a prior commitment to something to which subsequently you are faithful. For instance, take the common example of marriage. Usually, when you get married, at least in the traditional way, you pledge yourself to be mutually faithful. So supposing you as the husband go on a long journey, but for lack of opportunity you are not [un]faithful to your wife; that is not real fidelity. But if, when leaving her, you decided that you would not violate whatever vow you had made at the time of marriage to her, and if you adhered to that, then you can be said to be faithful; then you can be said to be observing fidelity. But not if it just happens as it were by accident due to lack of opportunity. Do you see what I mean? So it would seem to me that commitment is the initial stage of fidelity, and fidelity is the living up to the commitment, the persevering in the commitment. I would, as I say, just at a hazard, since the question has not been raised before, relate them in some such way.

Gerry: Gampopa mentions perseverance in the text on the first page of 'Going for Refuge'... fidelity ...?

[317]

S.: I think one could probably, in this context, use perseverance and fidelity in much the same way: perseverance is perhaps a term with a broader connotation than fidelity. 'Fidelity' is often used in a context where people are concerned, or where higher ideals are concerned.

Chairman: Bram has a question now.

Bram: On pp.103 and 104 Gampopa mentions two methods of Going for Refuge, an ordinary one in one stage, and a special one in three stages. I have got three questions on this subject.

1) Is there any essential difference between these two methods, or is the special method just a more elaborate version of the ordinary method?

S.: All right, let's answer that first. It would seem that the first method represents more of a sort of Hinayana Going for Refuge, and the second represents more of a Mahayanistic Going for Refuge. There seems to be some sort of difference of emphasis as between the two. Yes, this is clear, because Gampopa says: Intention also is of two kinds: (i) ordinary means that I take refuge because I cannot bear my individual misery;

that suggests the Hinayana approach

ii) particular that I take it because I cannot bear the misery of others. that is, out of compassion, which suggests the Mahayana approach. So one, one might say, yes, is the Hinayana Going for Refuge in the sense of the Going for Refuge of one who is only concerned with his own individual attainment of Nirvana, and the other is the Mahayana Going for Refuge in the sense of the Going for Refuge of one who is concerned with the attainment of Enlightenment for the benefit of all.

Bram: My second question is partly related to that; I think you have almost answered it:

(2) Are Gampopa's methods universal methods, or are they typical for Tibetan Buddhism during his lifetime?

S.: You mean these methods of Going for Refuge? I am not sure what the contemporary Buddhist practice is, but, very broadly speaking, the first method does correspond to the Going for Refuge in Theravada countries, and presumably the second corresponds to the Going for Refuge in Mahayana countries like China or Vietnam. Books about Buddhism in different countries don't usually give one any information, or much information, about basic things like Going for Refuge. They seem not to give any attention to those. They are much more concerned to discuss the nature of Nirvana or rebirth or whatever. Of course, one must also bear in mind that, in the case of people born in Buddhist countries, they usually consider themselves as having been born as Buddhists, so that there isn't usually any ceremony of initiation into Buddhism, any Going for Refuge in the full, strictly traditional, sense. They are brought up repeating the actual Going for Refuge formula on various occasions, but probably at no point in their lives, usually, is there an occasion on which, consciously and deliberately, they Go for Refuge, and when, therefore, there is definitely a Going for Refuge ceremony. I think one has to bear that in mind, too. There is a ceremony when you become a monk, because it is difficult to be born a monk, even in the most degenerate Buddhist countries! though some of them seem to manage something almost like that, so you can't usually be born

a monk, so there is a ceremony for becoming a monk. But there is very rarely a ceremony for becoming a Buddhist, i.e. Going for Refuge, because it is [317] assumed that you are born a Buddhist. That may not be the doctrinal position, but that is, so to speak, the popular assumption. So the Going for Refuge ceremony doesn't figure very prominently in Buddhist life in the East, usually.

Bram: In what way do Gampopa's methods correspond to the private and public ordination ceremonies in the WBO?

S.: Well, clearly, the ordinary and the special methods here do not correspond to the private and the public ordinations. That is quite clear, because obviously we don't make that hard and fast distinction between the Hinayana and the Mahayana. So far as we are concerned, there is the one Going for Refuge of which, in a manner of speaking, the arising of the Bodhicitta is an aspect. So we don't see these two things as separate and distinct.

Bram: Could one say that the WBO ordination is a synthesis of Gampopa's approaches?

S.: One could, except not a synthesis of two different things: a synthesis of two different aspects, really, of a single thing, aspects which have become separated in many parts of the Buddhist world. If one wants a sort of traditional parallel, the private ordination represents the Going Forth, one might say, and the public ordination represents the acceptance. One is pabbajja, the other is upasampada. One is Going Forth, including Going Forth as an individual, Going for Refuge as an individual; and the other is acceptance into the community of those who similarly have Gone Forth and Gone for Refuge. So there isn't a very genuine parallel with the methods mentioned here; though the essence of them is contained within our own ordination ceremony.

Jimmy(?): So what you are saying is that a person would have to go through both private and public [ordinations] to become a Member of the WBO? I have heard of instances where there has been a time lag I heard of one case where a person had a private ordination but not public.

S.: I don't remember any instance of someone having a private ordination without a public one

Jimmy: I must have been misled.

S.: no, not to the best of my recollection; no; no.

: I have heard of one instance where

S.: (interrupting) But I mean, it's not impossible, but they wouldn't then be a Member of the Western Buddhist Order. It is quite possible that I could give the Refuges and Precepts to people without accepting them into the Western Buddhist Order; in a sense, I do this in India, because [at] our public meetings people all want to recite the Refuges and Precepts. I administer them the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts, but they aren't ordained into the Western Buddhist Order. That is on another level altogether. But anyway, what was the rest of the question?

Jimmy: That was it. (?)

S.: But anyway, there is, as you say, a sort of gap between the private ordination and the public ordination. In theory, there is no reason why that shouldn't be 100 years! Because, in theory, if it can be five minutes it can be five days, if it can be five days it can be five weeks, and so on.

Jimmy: Would you say that is a kind of bardo?

[318]

S.: No, nothing to do with the bardo. Supposing just to give you an example supposing I was travelling somewhere, in some foreign country, and met someone who I felt was really ready to Go for Refuge, and I gave them the private ordination. But supposing there were no other Order Members in that country. How would their public ordination be held, one might say, as the Order is at present constituted? There would be no Order to receive them, so how could we have the public ordination? So they would have to go to a country where there were Order Members, where the Order did exist. That might take them some years, depending on their personal circumstances. But, anyway, this is all largely hypothetical, so perhaps we shouldn't discuss it too much. Otherwise we will be discussing how to perform ordinations on the Moon when we get there.

Jimmy: One last point. Is your use of private ordination traditional?

S.: Well, yes, in so far, as I said, there is the Going Forth traditionally and the upasampada, the pabbajja and upasampada. That is traditional. I thought this actually was clear when I explained from the very beginning of the Order that the private ordination represented, or corresponded to, the pabbajja of tradition and the public ordination to the upasampada of tradition.

Chairman: The next question comes from Kevin.

Kevin: It refers to a point made on p.104. It is to do with consecration of the images of the Three Jewels. As a general question, how does one consecrate the images of the Three Jewels and other devotional objects? What would be the practical value of such consecration?

S.: Consecration, in the strict sense, is a Vajrayana concept. In Theravada countries they don't consecrate images in quite the same way except to the extent that there is some lingering influence of the Mahayana or Vajrayana, not to say even of Hinduism. When you consecrate an image, you perform a meditation; you visualize. Supposing you are consecrating an image, say, of Amitabha. You meditate, you visualize Amitabha, and you then imagine using that word in the full sense that visualized Amitabha descending into the image and remaining there. These few words just summarize a quite lengthy and elaborate process. So it is as though the image has become alive, because the visualized image was not just a thought, not just an idea, but in a sense something you emanated from yourself and which you then caused to descend into the image, to associate itself with the image in much the same way that your consciousness is associated with your physical body. The image then, in a sense, even almost literally, becomes a living thing. Certainly in Hinduism it is regarded as a living thing. There is a term for this ceremony in Hinduism (or the corresponding ceremony), which is pranaprajistha, that is the establishment of the prana or life force in the image; and the image is then said to be jagrit(?), or awake. And there is no doubt that consciousness can, in a strange way, come to be associated with an apparently inanimate thing. Perhaps I shouldn't go

into this too much, because you just asked about consecration but, yes, consecration means the invoking of a deity, to use that term, to descend into an image and, in a manner of speaking, to dwell there. This is what consecration means in the strict Vajrayanic sense. By the way, I should just mention you can have a similar ceremony for a thangka, and this is why, at the back of the thangka, you see, corresponding to the three main points, the OM AH HUM. So, as part of the ceremony, the consecrating lama paints or draws the OM AH HUM, because when that figure is as it were vivified, it acquires those three centres, just as a living being has.

Dharmadhara: The eye is painted over as well by the lama?

[319]

S.: Er, no. In the case of images, I believe sometimes eyes are painted in. Strange to say, in Ceylon they have an eye-painting ceremony, though that isn't really part of the Theravada tradition; it is probably a survival from something Vajrayanic. They would probably be horrified if you told them they were ... Vajrayanic or even just Hindu influence, but there is no precedent for that in the Theravada tradition, strictly speaking.

Tape 31, Side 1

Then there is the legend about the famous Chinese painter who painted dragons on the wall of a temple: they were so lifelike that when you painted in the eyes they just flew away! There are all sorts of stories like that. Even in the classical tradition, we have got the story of who was it whose image came to life?

A Voice: Pygmalion.

S.: Pygmalion, yes. Anyway, no need to go into that.

Kevin: The second part of the question was: could you say what would be the practical significance of consecrating the objects of Refuge, the Three Jewels?

S.: You consecrate the Buddha image. To the best of my recollection, there is no consecration of the books, and no consecration of ah, no consecration of the members of the Sangha, of course, in the sense that you consecrate an image, because, after all, they are living things already. But what would be the value of consecrating the image? I suppose the practical value or utility of it is that you are then enabled to regard the image as a living being, and in many traditions, of course, an image or idol, if you like, is regarded as a living being and treated accordingly. You are then able to establish a relationship with it, which probably sounds rather strange to us, especially for the ex-Protestants rather than ex-Catholics. But, yes, this regarding of an image as a living thing and establishing a personal relationship with it as of one living thing, one person, with another, is very common in many traditions, from quite a low to quite a high cultural level. In the case of Hinduism, you can read the life of Sri Ramakrishna: that gives some very good examples of that kind of thing. On a more primitive or basic level, there is, you may remember, Moby Dick. Has anyone read Moby Dick? it is one of the great classics. In Moby Dick there is a character called Queequeg. Queequeg is a Polynesian, as far as I remember, and he worships a dreadful little idol at least, the hero in Moby Dick regards it as a rather dreadful little idol to begin with; but in the end he begins to appreciate Queequeg's worshipping of this dreadful little ugly idol as Queequeg produces it

every evening and seems to worship it, and clearly regards it as alive, a live person. And the narrator, who is the sort of hero of the book, in the end, despite all his prejudices, becomes quite sympathetic and even joins in the worship in the end. It is a very interesting part of the book. So this is image worship on another level. So you must not forget that when a Tibetan worships a Buddha image, at the back of his mind there is the feeling at least, even if unformulated that it is sort of alive; and similarly, perhaps, to an even greater extent, with Hindus when they go to worship images in temples: they are alive; they are not just statues, they are consecrated images. I have mentioned this in *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus*, haven't I, in connection with my visits to Hindu temples in south India? that, when the image is consecrated, the consecrating priest or priests have to decide how much food will be necessary each day to sustain the life of the image. So the food is placed in front of the image, and the image lives on, they believe, the subtle essence of the food, and that sustains its life. Some of these images, I found, have enormous appetites! (Laughter.) Kings used to assign land to produce food to [320] be offered to the images; that was the origin of the temple estates. I think it was much the same in ancient Egypt and Babylonia. I have gone into this a little bit just to make it clear it is a rather, from our point of view, curious way of thinking, but perhaps it is a way of thinking that we have to learn to understand, even if we don't sympathize with it.

Mike: The other evening we were talking about making offerings during the Puja which you then take back. But it is been my experience that, in doing that, with everything that you say against it, nonetheless that object that you have offered does take on special significance for you. Do you think that is a reasonable thing to do to make an offering of something that perhaps already has a certain meaning for you, to make an offering of it in the Puja and then to take it back?

S.: Well, these aren't objective, quantifiable things. If you feel that by as it were offering something to an image of the Buddha it is as it were blessed, so that when you take it back, well, there is a blessing as it were attached to it well, that is your personal feeling. It is really inappropriate to say whether that is objectively the case or not. The fact is, it is your feeling. So, as a feeling, it has its own validity. So, from that point of view, yes, if one feels like as it were offering something in the sense of placing it on the altar so that it may receive the blessing of the Buddha and then taking it away, enhanced with that blessing, well, from a traditional point of view that is quite acceptable. A lot of people do this. But that is a somewhat more complex idea, I would say, than that of simply making an offering.

Vessantara: What would be the spiritual value, Bhante, of having a consecrated image, if you were capable of feeling that that image had then become a living ...?

S.: I think it makes the spiritual ideal assuming that that particular image represents your ideal or embodies your ideal makes it more concrete and therefore more real to you. Because, very often, the spiritual ideal is very abstract, or at least we experience it as very abstract; so anything that can help make it more concrete is acceptable. On the other hand, perhaps there are dangers, especially in the case of unsophisticated people. But, on the other hand, sometimes the unsophisticated do get quite a long way further, sometimes, it would seem, than the more sophisticated, who might be theoretically more in the right. They may have got their theory much clearer, but the unsophisticated person often gets his practice more right. It is not easy, it seems, sometimes, to combine the two.

Vessantara: Would there be any dangers for us relative sophisticates?

S.: I suppose you are sophisticated, yes, in some ways. No, I think probably the only danger would be that you are just sort of going through the motions, without actually the corresponding unsophisticated feeling. I think it is very difficult for us to have an unsophisticated feeling. It is a bit like Marie Antoinette playing at being a shepherdess! But nonetheless, I must say that it has been my own experience or I can say it is still my own experience that, if you keep images with you, in your room, for any length of time I mean Buddha images and so on even if you haven't had them formally consecrated, after a while they do seem to have a sort of presence. I wouldn't say that it is exactly that they seem alive, but they are certainly not dead. Maybe a portion, so to speak, a portion of your consciousness becomes attached to or associated with them, and you perhaps you wouldn't go so far as to carry on a conversation with them, but you can certainly get the impression of a presence being there, not just a thing, not in the sense of a piece of stone or a piece of metal or wood; but definitely a presence. Perhaps there is a sort of animist lurking in us all. Perhaps it is a good thing.

[321]

Lalitaratna: Those all sound positive, Bhante. Can the opposite exist? something negative, an inanimate object apparently have a bad feeling to it? I heard a story once that some papers of yours had been at Broomhouse Farm and after they had been returned to you you destroyed them. I don't know how true that is.

S.: That is a very garbled version of something that did actually happen. I will give you another example from my own experience, of rather the same kind, but maybe more intelligible(?). Someone was staying with me in Kalimpong, and his letters used to come there; he was English; and one day a batch of mail came for him. I was sorting out the mail and separating his mail, and then I put my hand on a certain letter, and at once I had a feeling: 'There is something evil in this letter; there is something harmful.' I knew it; it wasn't that I sort of had a feeling; I definitely knew it. So I put this letter aside, and I reflected: 'Should I hand it over to him, or not? because there is definitely some evil here, something harmful to him.' So, after a while, I decided, no, I had no right to hold it back; so I gave it to him, and he took it away to his room. And, after five minutes, he came back rather upset, and showed me the letter and said, 'Look, see what I have received.' And it was a very unpleasant poison-pen letter from someone that he had known in the past. So that was really quite strange. So, yes, consciousness can, so to speak, attach itself to an inanimate object in a negative sense.

Lalitaratna: I would imagine that some form of metta practice would be a counter to that?

S.: Well, yes; because, if a negative thought can attach itself to a material object, so can a positive thought, and the positive thought can be stronger than the negative thought and can, so to speak, drive it out. How are we going?

Chairman: We've got three questions left.

S.: Are they allied questions, or do we jump on to quite other topics?

Chairman: They are other topics, yes.

S.: All different?

Chairman: All different.

S.: Let's have one more, then, and we'll keep the other two.

Chairman: Prasannasiddhi wanted to follow on from the last one first.

Prasannasiddhi: Yes, Bhante; you were saying that a positive thought can be stronger and drive it out. Does that mean that positive thoughts are stronger, or if you had a stronger thought ?

S.: I am not saying that any positive thought is stronger than any negative thought. Well, we know that in our contact with people. But I think a negative thought has an inherent tendency, one might say, to disintegrate; it is self-destructive. Whereas a positive thought is, well, creative, one might say. So I think in the long run, with sufficient persistence, a positive thought will prove more powerful than, and therefore be able to drive out, a negative one. But one mustn't underrate some people's capacity for negativity. Sometimes they seem to take all your resources of positivity before you can counteract them.

Chairman: OK, so the last question comes from Tejamitra.

[322]

Tejamitra: We discussed the categories of the Manu, the Buddha, the Guru and the Tertons

S.: Oh, that's interesting.

Tejamitra: On the subject of the Manu, would you agree to any of the following fulfilling the description: (some people suggested) Ambedkar, Confucius, Homer, and even George Washington and even Cosimo de Medici! Would you agree to any of those, and are there any others that you could add?

S.: Well, the term Manu isn't really very clearly defined. I would say, off the cuff, that a Manu is the creator of a civilization, or at least the one who lays down the pattern of a civilization, in the sense of the social structure which will support not just a genuinely human life but even a spiritual life. I would define a Manu in that way. So some of the figures you mention approximate to that to some extent probably Confucius more than any other, because, well, he didn't exactly lay down a pattern; he took his inspiration from the sages of old, he believed himself to be reaffirming their pattern; but, for all practical purposes, he was responsible for a great deal of the subsequent classical Chinese social structure, which supported its own higher culture. So, yes, I think there was something Manu-like in Confucius in relation to Chinese civilization and culture. Similarly with Homer, in a way; though, yes, Homer is an epic poet, but the Greeks regarded him as a moral and religious teacher and were always looking for examples and guidance in his two poems. So, again, to a somewhat more moderate extent than Confucius, he was a Manu in relation to the Greek peoples and those who inherited their concept of civilization and culture. Who else did you mention?

Tejamitra: George Washington.

S.: Hm. No was he responsible for laying down a social structure? No, he was only responsible or mainly responsible for the independence of America from Britain; so, no, I wouldn't regard that in itself as sufficient. Ideologically, perhaps, Jefferson is more important than Washington. But I doubt if even Jefferson qualifies as a real Manu, I think. And who else did you mention?

Tejamitra: Cosimo de' Medici.

S.: No, he wasn't responsible for setting up a social structure, was he? He wasn't a lawgiver. No. Moses, with regard to the Jewish people and through them the Christian peoples of the world, was a lawgiver, and to that extent a Manu though perhaps, from an Indian point of view, a rather limited one.

Pavel: What about Lenin?

S.: Ah, but did the particular social structure that he laid down well, if it was a social structure as distinct from a political system was it in itself capable of supporting a higher civilization and culture, a spiritual culture? That is rather doubtful. So I don't think we can mention Lenin. I think if anybody has a chance, it is Marx rather than Lenin. But I don't think he really laid down the pattern for a social structure capable of supporting higher spiritual life. Was there somebody else you mentioned?

Tejamitra: No, that was it, but there are more parts to the question.

S.: Right.

[323]

Tejamitra: In the category of the tertons we suggested Nagarjuna. Would you agree, and are there any others that you ?

S.: In the case of Nagarjuna, the pattern is that of a terton, a taker-out of a hidden treasure. Another example that came to my mind I don't know what I was thinking of in this connection only a few evenings ago, was Joseph Smith! (Some chuckles.) Yes! who was Joseph Smith?

Voices murmuring.

S.: Bright boy?

Voices: The Mormons.

S.: The Mormons, yes! So what did Joseph Smith do?

: Found this volume ...

S.: I am surprised how many people are so well informed about Mormonism! Clearly you have had some Mormon door knockers! Yes; but he maintained that he had discovered golden plates, which were inscribed in a mysterious way, and he had deciphered those inscriptions and in deciphering them he produced the Book of Mormon, which is the basic scripture,

along with the Bible, of the Mormons. So that definitely parallels the taken-out tradition of Tibet in a quite extraordinary way; because one of the methods is that one doesn't literally, in the case of a tertön, find a text ready written out; you find something on which you concentrate, and the ideas emerge in your mind as you contemplate, perhaps, the symbols with which that object is inscribed, and so on. And that is exactly what is supposed to have happened in the case of Joseph Smith. Even if it didn't happen like that in the case of Joseph Smith, it is rather odd, even so, that that is what it is said happened, what Mormons believe happened. Because this happened in, I believe, roughly 1820? 1825? Something like that, long before anything was known about tertöns in the West.

Tejamitra: The last bit of the question was from the point of view of between Guru and tertön which category do you yourself fit into?

S.: Oh dear. I am a sort of jack-of-all-trades, not to say maid-of-all-work! A bit of teaching, a bit of taking out, a bit of laying down the law! (Laughter.) A bit of answering questions! I really don't know; I don't know that I could or should categorize myself in any exclusive manner. I think there are other categories; I have mentioned these in the past. I have mentioned also the category of the prophet; I think that is a distinctive type. And possibly the mystic and the ascetic. These terms all pertain to what one might call the phenomenology of religion. There are distinctive types, it would seem, of religious persons. Sometimes you encounter them in their pure form, and sometimes in a mixed form. The Buddha, in a sense, was a Manu, because he laid down the Vinaya, one might say in principle, at least for the bhikkhus. So, to that extent, he was a lawgiver as well as a guru; unless you put the Buddha in a separate category from guru.

Prakasha: What would you say characterizes 'prophet' in terms of particular qualities?

S.: A prophet is usually defined as one who believes that he has a special commission from God; a message, if you like, from God, which he has to communicate to the people, to the nation, to his community, with regard usually to their behaviour and conduct even sometimes in political matters. This is the prophet.

[324]

Jarmo: Would you think that Asoka was a Manu?

S.: No, I wouldn't say Asoka was a Manu, because he didn't himself lay down any social system, any laws. But he certainly enforced the Buddha's ethical teaching on the social and political plane. He was a Dharmaraja, which is again another category.

Dhammarati: Is the prophet just a mystic in ... and Buddhist tradition?

S.: Well, that is interesting. One does, of course, find prophets mainly in the Jewish tradition; but perhaps the shaman is a sort of prophet. Perhaps the oracle is a sort of prophet. Because they all speak out, as it were, on behalf of some other power whether it is the monotheistic God, or a god or a spirit, even. They deliver a message which is not theirs; they are only the medium, whether on a higher or a lower level.

Dhammarati: And in the Buddhist tradition?

S.: Well, one does have the oracles of Tibet; but they would seem to have been inherited by Tibetan Buddhism from the pre-Buddhistic shamanistic Bon tradition.

Gerry: On the subject of the tertons, would Madame Blavatsky, of the Theosophists, correspond to a terton?

S.: Possibly, because she did profess to be able to read the Akasic records and to transcribe from them; so one could say perhaps she could be regarded, at least from their point of view, as a sort of terton.

Gerry: There is a tradition of prophets within the Jewish [tradition]. What about prophets in relation to the FWBO: have we any prophets here?

S.: Well, perhaps, in a sense, one does, or one might in future. One wouldn't have, of course, theistically inspired prophets, but one might have people who felt that a sort of message had come to them from as it were a higher source than themselves in the ordinary sense, which they had to deliver to the rest of the Movement; some warning, perhaps. Prophets very often warn, exhort, or denounce. Prophets, though, in a way aren't very characteristic of Buddhism, because their mode tends to be denunciatory and threatening, and that is just not the way of Buddhism.

Dhammarati: I wondered if you get prophets where you've got a split between them and the other power, and the mode is denunciatory in connection with ... ?

S.: Well, yes, certainly, if one considers the nature, the broad general nature of the Jewish god, Jehovah; often a very threatening figure. In the history of the religions of the world, probably the major prophetic figure is, of course, Muhammad, who is regarded as a prophet and the last and greatest of the prophets, by the Muslims; who also regard Jesus as a prophet, not as the son of God, but as Muhammad's immediate predecessor.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, you spoke of a prophet as speaking on behalf of some other existent power. I was wondering if you could ... think of a person being inspired by their yidam to speak in a prophetic sense?

S.: One could, in principle, but I don't recollect any actual examples from, say, Tibetan Buddhist history, of that happening, except to a limited extent by way of teachings. There is that little book, *The Manjusri Tradition*, where a certain teacher hears, in the course of a spiritual experience, Manjusri giving a certain [325] teaching, and then he as it were passes on that tradition to other people, to his pupils and so on. But that is a rather different sort of thing. In the case, say, of the Hebrew prophets, they would scold the Jewish people for going whoring after false gods, worshipping idols and associating with strange women and eating forbidden meats and things of that sort. Or they would comment on the political situation, or declare that Israel's troubles, or the fact that Israel had been defeated in war, were due to its sins; God was punishing Israel. Prophets were interpreters of events in that way. And then they would go on to say that if Israel wanted the troubles to end they should return to God and placate God and so on. That was also the function of the prophet. The oracles of Greece functioned in much the same way, because the Pythoness, the priestess, was believed to be inspired by the god Apollo, who spoke through her. He didn't speak very intelligibly, he spoke in a way that had to be interpreted by a special class of priests, who then wrote down

what, according to their interpretation, was the message or instruction of the god. But, unlike the utterances or deliverances of the Hebrew prophets, Apollo's deliverances were often highly ambiguous or even in a sort of riddle-like form again, perhaps, in keeping with the polytheistic mode. Mike: Do you think, Bhante, that what the West really needs is another tertion or prophet or a mystic or a Manu?

S.: I think yes; I think, in some ways, that is where you've got to start. This is why we often speak in terms of the new society; because a lot of people within the present society, as society is at present organized, just don't stand a chance of human life, spiritual development; they have to struggle against the odds all the time, and you can only succeed in doing that if you are perhaps an unusually strong character. So if one had a more ideal social structure, a social structure more conducive to people's spiritual development, there would be more spiritual development on the part of people. So yes, we need a new social system, a new social structure, a new ideal, and this is why we have our own blueprint for the new society. That is why we are here! in a sense, from a certain point of view. All the old structure is really in process of disintegration, various bits and pieces of it surviving and being propped up here and there. There is no coherent social structure based on a definite human or spiritual ideal any more in the West. Anyway, that is a very big subject, and in a way a subject we perhaps shouldn't go into now.

[326]

Tape 32, Side 1

Chairman: Tonight we come to the final session of questions and answers, on ch.8, 'Taking Refuge'. We have nine questions, and one observation to be made at the end, so we have got to get through all nine questions tonight; so be quite aware of the time as we go on during the evening, but don't [put] too many supplementaries which don't need to be asked, otherwise the questions might be cut.

S.: Well, in any case, [we have] the smaller discussion groups later on.

Chairman: The first question is from Ted.

Ted: This question concerns the sections of the pratimoksa. Note 32 on p.110 describes a siksamana as a woman who observes the rules valid for a sramanerika without being herself a sramanerika. Can you explain the traditional position of the siksamana, and say why this position exists for women novices and not for men?

S.: Hm. (Pause.) There is a reason. (Laughter.) When a woman is accepted as a novice, there is the possibility that she might be pregnant; so she stays as it were with the nuns for that four-month period, observing the rules of a novice, and during that period, if she does happen to be pregnant, it will become obvious; in that case she will not be ordained.

Ted: So it's just a four-month period?

S.: As far as I remember it is a four-month period, yes.

Jarmo: Bhante, what happened to the bhikshuni tradition? Did it die out totally?

S.: The bhikshuni lineage did die out in some parts of the Buddhist world, but not in others. It died out, of course, in India, as did the bhikshu lineage. It died out in Tibet; in fact, it is very doubtful if it was ever properly introduced in Tibet. It died out in Sri Lanka; in fact, it died out throughout the Theravada Buddhist world. It did not die out in China; it did not die out in Korea, and possibly some other parts of the Mahayana Buddhist world, and at present those women who wish to take bhikshuni ordination have to take it from the Chinese tradition, whether directly from the Chinese tradition or from the Chinese tradition as it has survived in Korea.

Chairman: The next question is from Mike.

Mike: Do you think that the FWBO is more traditionally based in Buddhism than the Nikayas of Theravada Buddhism?

S.: I suppose, to some extent, it depends what you mean by traditionally based.

Mike: I define 'traditional' here as more in accordance with the spirit of the Enlightened Buddha, and also more faithful to the scriptures, in putting the Teachings into practice.

S.: I think, broadly speaking, the answer to that would be yes. I think that emerged very much in the course of our study, some weeks ago, of *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka*. I must say, quite frankly, that I myself was surprised at the extent to which Buddhism in Sri Lanka had deteriorated. I knew that it had deteriorated, and I made some pretty sharp comments on that, as long ago as [when I wrote] the Survey, but I must confess that I had no idea that things were really quite so bad

[327]

as this book revealed them as having been and in fact still being. Even to me it was something of an eye-opener. So I think that, in the FWBO at least, we have a clearer conception of what the Buddha's teaching was, what is required of a Buddhist; and I think we do make a definite effort to be true to that. Just to touch on one particular issue: when you find members of the Sangha actually observing the caste system, that does represent a very serious deterioration indeed, [not] to speak of any other thing.

Chairman: The next question is

Dharmadhara: I was going to ask about the political situation in Sri Lanka as it seems to be supported by the bhikshu Sangha.

S.: Yes, that is something that has concerned me quite a bit in recent months. Some of you may remember a book review I wrote about ten years ago, of Walpola Rahula's *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu*. It is rather in my mind, not to say on my mind, because I have been writing about it today in the course of writing an introduction to my collected book reviews. Basically, this book of Walpola Rahula's is an attempt to show in fact, he does show that throughout the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka the monk has always taken an active part in politics; and he regards the right, as he sees it, of the monk to take an active part in politics as constituting the heritage of the bhikkhu. And there were some really quite shocking things, which he himself mentions, or describes, in the course of this book, without apparently realizing how shocking they are. Maybe it is not too shocking to look on Buddhism as being

the state religion of Sri Lanka, but then you get passages, some of them quoted from the Mahavamsa, where Sinhalese soldiers fighting, so to speak, with the heathen, are exhorted and encouraged to do so by the monks. And when a certain king feels remorseful at having killed some of his enemies, he is told by arhant bhikkhus not to bother because they were non-Buddhists and as such no better than animals, and that therefore killing them was no sin. So, after reading these things, I thought my strictures on the Sinhalese Theravada in the Survey perhaps were not even severe enough. But Walpola Rahula recounts these things without turning a hair, and this really seems quite astonishing. So one can really see the seeds, in this long-standing attitude of the Sinhalese Buddhists, of the present conflicts. Because, in effect, the Sinhalese-speaking Buddhist majority tried to impose Sinhalese as the national language, and virtually Buddhism as the religion, on the Tamil Hindu minority, which was not at all in accordance with the spirit of Buddhism. That is the reason why we have so much trouble there. So these things are rather fresh in my mind. I don't have any very recent information, because obviously we have been away from England now for five weeks. It did seem, at the time of my departure, that things might get better; there seemed just a slender chance that they might. I can't really say anything more than that. I hope that, by the time we get back, there will be news that the situation in Sri Lanka has improved, but in the meantime the fact that Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka could have taken the stand that they have been taking is really quite shameful for Buddhists everywhere. At the Order Office we have had letters from other Western Buddhists asking whether we did not think it was time that we should make a stand and make our position known. We probably are going to publish something in the Newsletter, just to make it clear that, because we are Buddhists, it doesn't mean that we automatically support what at least some Buddhists in Sri Lanka are doing.

Dhammarati: If I remember right, Bhante, in your essay on ...'s discovery and his revelation in The Path of the Inner Life, you make a connection between the ... of Christianity and Islam and the intolerance and factionalism that comes from these religions. And in a way you compare Christianity's record unfavourably to Buddhism's. Does this kind of thing complicate that argument, where you have an example of -

[328]

S.: It doesn't complicate the argument; it complicates the situation, one might say. The Sinhalese seem to be in a very peculiar position. They seem to regard themselves as the custodians of Buddhism the pure Dhamma, as they put it and they have a sort of national pride on that account which goes beyond anything that is justifiable, really, from a Buddhist point of view. They firmly believe that the Buddha visited Sri Lanka three times. They firmly believe that on his deathbed the Buddha entrusted the Dharma to the people of Sri Lanka, and predicted that they would be faithful to it and would protect it. So they firmly believe that theirs is the true, original, authentic Buddhism, which has degenerated everywhere else. So the fact that they nonetheless are non-theistic doesn't help very much here. It is what I call religionationalism; it is not straightforward theological intolerance, it is a form of nationalism, really; nationalism which derives support from a religious tradition wrongly understood. I sometimes have thought that the Sinhalese have got an inferiority complex where India is concerned, because Sri Lanka is a tiny island compared with India, which is a whole subcontinent. This is not to say that many, many Sinhalese Buddhists are individually very nice people indeed; but get them on the subject of the Tamils, and they change. They well, they almost don't regard the Tamils as human beings. There are other factors, economic factors, in the situation we won't go into all that now there are linguistic factors, and so on. One of the astonishing things that Walpola Rahula says, in effect, in his book, is that a

Sinhalese must be a Buddhist; which again is extraordinary if you have been brought up to believe, as most of you have, that you Go for Refuge as a result of your own individual choice, and that if you don't have the freedom not to Go for Refuge you haven't really got the freedom to Go for Refuge. He seems entirely to overlook that. So, rereading this review, it was in a way quite a sad experience to see the roots of these present-day troubles in Ceylon and to realize that those troubles had got worse since that book was published ten years ago and they were in a pretty bad way even then. It is a very long, complicated story; a real record of human folly in the way the situation has deteriorated since the independence of Ceylon in 1948. It just need not have happened. I must say personally I entirely blame the short-sightedness and folly of the Sinhalese Buddhist majority not excluding the majority of the bhikkhus. But when this book of reviews comes out, just read this particular review again, and just study the situation in Ceylon in the light of that; or even read Walpola Rahula's book, which you will find in the Order Library. To add insult to injury, he has had, one might say, the effrontery to publish a couple of articles in The Middle Way on 'The Future of the Sangha in the West!' offering good advice and suggestions! But that is another story. In a way, he is a sort of worthy person; he is quite amiable, quite friendly, and he is an academic now. But very, very well, confused, basically, in many respects. Anyway, I won't digress any further. It is just a pity that there should be this particular blot on the escutcheon of Buddhism. To some extent, it derogates from our credibility as Buddhists. (Murmurs of assent.)

Chairman: The next question comes from Roger.

Roger: The question relates to p.107, halfway down, just after the three points that he makes: the line starting 'The two former are no foundation for that discipline.' The question is: What is the difference between the Hinayana view and the Mahayana view concerning

a) the discipline being abandoned at death?

(b) the continuation of the discipline?

[329]

S.: As far as I recollect, it is the Hinayana view, too, that any discipline is abandoned at death, and that therefore in one's new birth, one's new incarnation, one has to take that discipline again.

Roger: But the Mahayana view is that once you take a discipline that would be carried on, as it were, into the next life?

S.: What does it actually say here?

Roger: It says: 'The ethics '

S.: Yes, 'If one or the other of the seven sections is taken up ... out of a desire - ' is that the passage?

Roger: No, just after that: 'The two former are no foundation for that discipline.

'S.: Ah: 'The ethics of the Bodhisattva-discipline, however, are found among such beings; they are not abandoned at death and can be revived once they have been destroyed.' One can

say that there are two conceptions of discipline, whether the pratimoksa or any other: the one that of the Hinayana, when you take it as a basis for your own individual Enlightenment; the other that of the Mahayana, when you take it as a basis for gaining Enlightenment for the benefit of all. According to the Hinayana, any discipline, whether pratimoksa or any other, that you take terminates with death, and also if you break it in the course of this lifetime it cannot be renewed. That is in the case of the bhikshu or bhikshuni. In the case of the Mahayana, they don't hold that. They maintain that, if you take a particular discipline as a basis for the development of the Bodhicitta and gaining Enlightenment for the benefit of all, then that can be sustained from one life to another, presumably in the wake of the Bodhicitta. But, to the best of my knowledge, no one in Buddhist history has ever claimed that 'I have taken, say, ordination in a previous life and therefore I don't need to take it in this life.' That is, in actual practice, every follower of the Mahayana, even if he believes that he has followed the Bodhisattva Path in previous lives, still again in this life takes the particular discipline, whichever it is.

Pavel: [What about] incarnate lamas?

S.: Well, take the well-known instance of the Dalai Lama. Some of you must have read the life of the Dalai Lama, or at least something about the life. The Dalai Lama is believed to be the tulku of Avalokitesvara himself, so in his case, one might think that if his discipline had been continued from previous lifetimes he would not need to be ordained; but actually we find that, yes, he was ordained at a sramanera at a certain age, and then again at the age of 20 he was ordained as a bhikshu, as a gelong. So it would seem that, in practice, even if one believes that oneself or some other person is a Bodhisattva or has taken the Bodhisattva discipline in a previous lifetime, it is still in a sense, in order to honour tradition, taken again in this lifetime. So, practically speaking, it would seem there is no difference.

Chairman: The next question comes from Vessantara.

Vessantara: This is about Bodhisattva ordination. I have heard you say in the past that you don't envisage having a Bodhisattva ordination within the WBO. The reasons that I seem to remember you adducing are, firstly, that there is the danger of people giving themselves spiritual airs, as it were; thinking that they were Bodhisattvas and

S.: Yes, the danger of inflation, one might say.

[330]

Vessantara: Yes and, secondly, that it was very hard for anyone to conceive of what it really meant to be a Bodhisattva and to take the Bodhisattva Path. Just to look at it, as it were, from another point of view: if you are saying that an Order Member who practises could in perhaps 20 or 30 years hope to gain Stream Entry, if the arising of the Bodhicitta can be seen as the outward-going, the other-regarding aspect of Stream Entry, does that not suggest that there would be people who would be in a position to take Bodhisattva ordination without a risk of inflation; they would actually have an arisen Bodhicitta?

S.: It is not so much Bodhisattva ordination in a technical sense. After all, probably millions of people in the Mahayana Buddhist world have it not that that necessarily carries any weight with us when it comes to a matter of principle. It is more a question of the Bodhisattva vow or vows, because the vow finds a number of expressions. I don't know how many of you have

actually read some of the Mahayana sutras where Bodhisattva vows are described, but those vows seem to go way beyond anything that it would be possible for any individual as such to carry out. Therefore, I tend to think of the Bodhisattva vow as representing a sort of cosmic phenomenon which the individual even the individual Stream Entrant may aspire to participate in, rather than himself, in the literal sense, actually make or take. Having said that, I think that so far as the Order is concerned, things do still need to be taken a stage farther. I think we need to make more explicit, or more concrete, the possibility of that participation in the Bodhisattva vow, let us say; and one of the ideas that I have had which I think we may carry out some time is that, after, say, a preliminary study of the Bodhisattva precepts, as I, in accordance with tradition, received them from Dhardo Rimpoche some years ago after a preliminary study of those in a study retreat so that there may be some understanding of their import within the Order it occurred to me that perhaps, from time to time, perhaps on special occasions, we should recite them at Order meetings; perhaps in the course of the Order Convention, as it were collectively. Do you see what I mean? This would be a sort of parallel expression to what we do when we think of the Order as reflecting, however faintly, the Eleven-Headed and Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara. It could be considered as running parallel to that. So that a more positive element of that Bodhisattva aspiration, or that particular aspect of the Going for Refuge, is infused into the Order at large. This is what I have been thinking in terms of that we should begin, as I said, by having a study group some time, with perhaps some of the senior and more experienced Order Members on the Bodhisattva Precepts, and then perhaps incorporating them in meetings of the Order, especially on a specially important occasion, like the Convention.

Vessantara: Can I ask how many Bodhisattva Precepts you received from Dhardo Rimpoche?

S.: That, according to the Tibetan tradition, is the list of 56. It is somewhat different in the Chinese tradition. But I did go through them all with him quite carefully. He based himself, as far as I remember, on Tsongkhapa's commentary, and after going through them with him I rendered them from Tibetan into English, and I still have that list somewhere. It is just another of those things I have to get around to doing some time.

: Did you have any other ideas as to how we could within the Order reflect that spirit ... ?

[331]

S.: No, not so far.

Chairman: The next question is from Gerry.

Gerry: Order Members within the WBO are called Dharmacari; we take upasaka ordination. I know the reasons for it. Is there an anomaly?

S.: Yes, it is an anomaly that is going to be cleared up this year, in fact this month! I thought about it last year, but somehow or other didn't actually get around to doing anything about it. I forget why. But I had it in mind to have a word with Vessantara in the course of the next few days, before prospective Order Members start being taken through the ordination ceremony. So perhaps we will leave it there; further explanations will follow.

Dharmadhara: In so far as the kesa seems to represent upasaka ordination, [do you envisage] any changes?

S.: Yes, I have been thinking about that. In fact, I have been racking my brains for two or three years now. I haven't really come up with any solution yet. Because, in India, the colour yellow is associated with the monastic state and the colour white is associated with the lay state. So how are you going to find a colour which is neither monastic nor lay which has neither monastic associations nor lay associations? But then again, I thought: the white colour is not lay. Lay has got really two meanings I don't know if anybody has thought about this. You can have a layman, in the sense of well, let's confine the discussion to traditional Buddhism you can have a layman in the sense of someone who accepts Buddhism but who is not a monk; he is usually called an upasaka. But you can also have a layman in the sense of someone who is neither a monk nor a layman in the sense of an upasaka. So, in the Buddha's day, white was not the colour just of upasakas; it was the colour of all laymen in that second sense. Do you see what I mean? In the same way, the yellow colour was the colour not only of those monks, let us say, who followed the Buddha but monks who followed all sorts of other teachers. So there is really nothing specifically Buddhist about these colours except by association over the ages. They really go back to Indian tradition. So one could say that the colour white doesn't necessarily suggest the layman, in the sense of the Buddhist layman, as opposed to the Buddhist monk. But then again I had another thought, which was that if you regard the bhikkhu, at least originally, as being, let's say, the real Buddhist, not the one who just carries on staying at home, perhaps one could say that that saffron or orange colour is the Buddhist colour, and if you are a Buddhist at all, regardless of lifestyle, you should sport that colour. In which case all the kesas maybe ought to be orange, or yellow. But these are just thoughts that have passed through my mind. What it really means is we are having to bring some of the more traditional observances and practices with which we started traditional in the narrower sense into line now with our more, one might say, truly traditional practice. On the other hand, again, another consideration: we have got anagarikas now, and these anagarikas wear saffron-coloured robes. In the case of our friend the late Mahadhammavira, over his saffron robe he proudly wore his white kesa on formal occasions blue shirt, saffron-coloured robe, and over that, white kesa! So it looks as though it is not going to be very easy to sort this matter out. But no doubt we will all be giving some thought to it, and we shall come up with a generally acceptable solution; which might be, even, to carry on as we are; or it might not. We will have to see.

Vessantara: You haven't thought of having a red kesa, have you, Bhante? Because originally, when you envisaged the Order, you were going to have white for the upasaka, red for the mahaupasaka; and of course the whole ... of the Order now has reached the level that mahaupasakas were going to be.

[332]

S.: That's right. The only difficulty is that red is not a particularly Buddhist colour traditionally. The Tibetans wear red the Tibetan monks wear red robes; but those are not, strictly speaking, robes if you see what I mean. Again, in a sense, that colour might be suitable inasmuch as those red robes are worn not only by getsos, but even by the genyes in the monasteries, that is to say the upasakas in the monasteries. And the other people outside who would, say, merely take the Refugees though we wouldn't quite agree with that, not with the 'merely' just wear other colours.

Vessantara: It is also the colour of the Sangha Jewel, isn't it, so you could see us all as one Sangha?

S.: That is true, yes. Of course, one also must point out that, in different parts of the Buddhist world parts even of the Theravada Buddhist world they wear different colours; Sinhalese bhikkhus on the whole, say, of the Shama Nikaya, go in for bright yellow, like a buttercup or marigold. The Burmese go in for a rather dull yellowish brown. The Thais seem to go in usually for a light sort of salmon colour, almost pink, sometimes. The Tibetans, of course, normally wear that maroon, which is, strictly speaking, not a monastic robe; and over that on formal occasions they wear a yellow silk robe, with the patches. Chinese monks, those who are actually bhikshus, normally wear a sort of slate grey or slate blue underrobe, a black sort of scholar's robe over that, and on formal occasions their yellow robe, with patches, over that. So there are all sorts of patterns and styles. Again, we must not think, as I pointed out in that seminar on The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka, that great uniformity prevails throughout the Buddhist world and it is only the Western Buddhist Order that has gone a bit off the rails and deviated from the universal usage. That is not the case at all. You have seen the Nichiren monks, the drum beaters; what do they wear? White robes and sort of strange housemaid's bonnets, also white! Where they got those from, I have absolutely no idea at all not from India, certainly. And then you think of, again, the Tibetan monks, the strange sort of headgear they wear on various occasions. I once had the idea in Kalimpong that, since I could not afford to collect thangkas, I would collect hats; because I identified at least 30odd different kinds of hat or cap or mitre worn by Tibetan Buddhist monks. One of my own teachers it was Kachu Rimpoche used to come to see me, I think almost every time, wearing a different kind of hat; he had all sorts of extraordinary things. He had long shovel hats, and he had a very broad-brimmed Padmasambhava-type hat, and he had a little conical cap; he had all sorts of wonderful caps. And I really was seriously tempted to form a little collection. I wish now that I had; it might have been quite valuable, because one could pick up all sorts of weird and wonderful caps in Kalimpong in those days which have probably just gone out of use now; you probably can't get them. You certainly don't see them in the West. You see the odd Western Tibetan Buddhist, I think, wearing them. But anyway, that is again by the by. It doesn't really solve our problem. It just shows that it isn't quite so simple and straightforward as we might have thought. It is not so easy, on any level, just to be a simple, straightforward Buddhist! This is what it really means.

Buddhadasa: I was just wondering what you would think about the colour blue for the kesa. Presumably you have thought of that too? It has got some rather nice associations.

S.: But the question arises: why blue? I think also, though we have adopted blue shirts in India, in the Theravada world especially you have to be very careful with the colour blue, because it is the colour, according to their tradition, of the dreadful vaitulyavadins(?), the Tantric monks who just for a few centuries infested the pure Dhamma in Sri Lanka and were eventually expelled!

[333]

Buddhadasa: [That might be] quite a good reason for adopting it!

S.: They were nilamba(?), blue-robed. Also there was the Ari sect Ari being a corruption of Arya of Burma; also Tantric monks wearing blue robes. So, in the Theravada Buddhist world, the blue robe has not got a very good press, so it would be rather provocative, perhaps, to wear a blue robe. It really would set them thinking.

Prasannasiddhi: Dharmadhara was talking about kesas in the Order meeting a few days ago,

and I got the impression that the kesa itself was a lay symbol. Is that so?

S.: No, no. The kesa as such is of Japanese origin. I thought this was a matter of common knowledge, but perhaps it isn't. Kesa is the Japanese corruption of the Sanskrit kashaya kashaya meaning simply the yellow or the saffron robe of the monk. And, the Japanese being a very practical people, in the days when they did have monks they don't in the strict sense have them any longer, but in the days when they did have monks monks found it wasn't always practical to wear the full robes; perhaps when they were working, or on certain secular social occasions. So they devised and wore a sort of abbreviated robe, a token robe if you like; and that was what we call the kesa. So in Japan nowadays it is worn on, say, semiformal occasions by those who consider themselves to be committed Buddhists and who have received some kind of ordination usually the Bodhisattva ordination, because bhikshu ordination has died out there. They have them of different colours even, I think, shapes and sizes for different purposes.

Prasannasiddhi: So do we find some lay people wearing white kesas in the Buddhist world?

S.: Well, kesas are not worn in the Theravada Buddhist world, they are only worn in the Mahayana world, mainly in Japan. And there, inasmuch as they don't have monks, they don't have lay people either. They all take, in one form or another I think in practically all schools the Bodhisattva ordination. So you could say, very broadly, that if you encounter a Japanese who is wearing a kesa, he has received the Bodhisattva ordination in one or another of the sects or schools of Japanese Buddhism; though that is an oversimplification, because each school has its own degrees and grades of ordination.

Dharmadhara: You see them on Japanese pilgrims in India.

S.: Yes. So, in Mahayana Buddhism, to some extent the Bodhisattva ordination functions in much the same way, practically, that the ordination that is to say, the Going for Refuge functions in our case within the Western Buddhist Order. It is a unifying factor; in, say, the Mahayana countries of Asia even now you can have the Bodhisattva ordination and be either a monk or a layman, as it were; just as, in the case of the Western Buddhist Order, you can Go for Refuge, be an Order Member, be a Dharmacari, and either live at home with wife, family, children and so on or be virtually a freelance, a wanderer, even an anagarika. The unifying factor is the Going for Refuge. Similarly in the case of the Mahayana, the unifying factor is the Bodhisattva ordination, and we have seen that the Bodhisattva vow or rather the Bodhicitta is an aspect of the Going for Refuge itself. I hope all these things will become clear, if they haven't already become clear, in the course of the next few weeks, as it is important that people do get them really clear. So if there are any lingering doubts or anything is not quite clear, those points can be brought up when we have our smaller discussion groups. That is one of the purposes of those groups, to enable people to bring up these sort of questions.

[334]

Chairman: OK, so next we have a question from Jarmo.

Jarmo: Bhante, what kind of spiritual person is siddha, and what is the siddha tradition?

Tape 32, Side 2

S.: Very broadly speaking, the siddha is the ideal man of the Vajrayana. I believe I have gone into this in an article I wrote many years ago, called 'Ordination and Initiation in the three Yanas.' Anyone seen this?

Voices: Yes.

S.: Yes. In the Hinayana, the ideal man is the Arhant; in the Mahayana, the ideal man is the Bodhisattva. So, in much the same way, in the Vajrayana, the ideal man is the siddha. 'Siddha', coming from siddhi the siddha is the man who possesses siddhi. Siddhi has a twofold significance: one, it means Enlightenment in the specifically Vajrayanic sense, and, two, it means supernormal powers. So the siddha is the one who is not only Enlightened but who possesses, one might say, the full complement of supernormal powers. He is also, to outward appearances and this is a very distinctive feature of the siddha a very unconventional person. He doesn't follow the monastic discipline. He appears not to follow any discipline at all. He is very free and spontaneous in his behaviour, and sometimes the siddha ideal is supposed to represent a sort of reaction against the rather formalized observance of the Mahayana monks living in the big monasteries. Of course, you have to be careful that you don't jump to the conclusion that you are following the siddha ideal when you are merely being individualistic or unmindful, or something like that. But, yes, that is what a siddha is, broadly.

Barry: Is compassion emphasized in the siddha ideal in the same way as it is in the Bodhisattva ?

S.: The siddha ideal doesn't supersede the Bodhisattva ideal; the siddha is a Bodhisattva, you might say, but a rather special kind of Bodhisattva, or a Bodhisattva who lives in a particular way. The siddha ideal, you might even say, stresses one particular aspect of the Bodhisattva ideal, one particular aspect of the Bodhisattva's compassion, which is that, out of compassion, you don't shrink from doing anything that might help somebody on the spiritual path. You don't care how unconventional your behaviour is. Some siddhas might go and live, for instance, with swineherds, might help them to keep pigs, feed the pigs, look after them, just so as to be able to approach those people and teach the Dharma to them. Swineherds were very unrespectable people in Indian society; respectable people wouldn't go near them; respectable monks, even respectable Bodhisattvas, wouldn't go near them. But the siddha would mix with them freely, in order to be able to talk to them and teach them the Dharma. So you mustn't see the siddha as departing from or renouncing, really, the Bodhisattva ideal; no, the siddha ideal, one might say, is a special development of the Bodhisattva ideal, just as the Vajrayana itself is a special development of the Mahayana. It builds on the Mahayana, it doesn't repudiate it.

Mike: Have you personally met a siddha, Bhante?

S.: Well, I might well have done. But it might be difficult to identify a siddha, because he wouldn't be dressed in the silks and jewels of a Bodhisattva, and he wouldn't be wearing a monastic robe; perhaps wouldn't even be wearing a white robe. Perhaps the nearest I have come to meeting a siddha a Buddhist siddha is probably Checho(?) Sangye Dorje, who was more that type of person. But even he wore some kind of red robe; it was difficult to see what sort of red robe. It wasn't even clear whether he had had the sramanera ordination; it was a plain red [335] garment, really, lined with sheepskin and rather dirty, and he was quite a wild

sort of character, roaming here and there and behaving rather strangely. Perhaps he was nearest I have come to a siddha. There was another old lama I met, living by the side of a chorten in Sikkim. He might have been a siddha; he was reputed to have all sorts of wonderful powers; he was also a great whisky drinker! (Laughter.) ...siddhas are like that, you know. : Is Kovida a siddha? (Roar of laughter.)

S.: Well, you'll have to ask Kovida himself that! He certainly doesn't drink whisky so far as I know! even though he is a Scot. But, of course, you have to be careful: a siddha may drink whisky, but you are not a siddha because you drink whisky! One who drinks whisky is not therefore a siddha. One has to be rather careful there are all sorts of pitfalls.

Chairman: The next question comes from Dhammarati.

Dhammarati: On p.104, Bhante, at the foot of the page, the indented paragraph which begins: 'What is taking refuge with a mind free from the hustle and bustle', and so on. We made a more or less informed guess as to the meaning of this paragraph, but Gampopa's description of the Refuges, and I must admit for me especially the Sangha Refuge, I don't think we completely fathomed its meaning. I wonder if you could expand on these three Refuges?

S.: Well, clearly, this explanation of the Three Refuges is from, one might say, a very lofty philosophical point of view. I don't know that I can explain it in better words than is done here. 'What is taking refuge with a mind free from the hustle and bustle of the world? By knowing all entities to be non-existent' one has to be careful how one understands this 'non-existent': he doesn't mean non-existent as opposed to existent, he means sunyata. 'to see them as incapable of being given form and primary characteristics,' which are characteristics of mundane things; though, again, in a way, there is a sort of contradiction here, because sunyata is not remote from form; form is sunyata, sunyata is form. 'of being taken as entities in themselves, but to see them as being perfect Buddhahood, is to take refuge in the Buddha.' Well, put it this way, paraphrase it though it is putting it very crudely it is not that the Buddha only is the Buddha; all sentient beings, one might say, are potentially the Buddha, or even in a sense actually, at present, the Buddha, if 'Buddha' represents Ultimate Reality, because all beings embody Ultimate Reality, all beings are Ultimate Reality. So to take refuge in the Buddha in the deepest sense is to take refuge in all sentient beings, seeing that, in the depths of their being as it were, they too are Buddha. This is Going for Refuge to the Buddha in the highest sense. And then: 'To see all entities follow the way of the Dharmadhatu, is taking refuge in the Dharma.' If all beings are Buddha, then they cannot but behave as Buddhas; they cannot but be on the Path in the highest sense, cannot but follow the way of the Dharmadhatu. To see this 'is to take refuge in the Dharma.' And then 'To see the conditioned and unconditioned as not to be split up into duality, is taking refuge in the Sangha.' So you don't think of the Sangha as an assemblage of people separate from you, or as yourself as separate from the other members of the Sangha; that is to think dualistically. But when you see there is no self and no other, no conditioned and no unconditioned, no mundane being and no Transcendental being, no ordinary people and no Buddhas, then you take refuge in the Sangha. [336] This is all very true, but at present it doesn't really have very much meaning for us in the sense of any real practical application; so perhaps we need not, once we have understood it in a vague sort of way, dwell on it overmuch. This does pertain, one might say, to the Path of Irregular Steps, for the time being.

Chairman: Next we come to Dharmadhara's question.

S.: How are we going with the questions?

Chairman: Very well: we are on the eighth question. We have got one more question and one point to follow.

Dharmadhara: Bhante, this arose from what you were saying last night about consciousness arising in dependence upon ... I suppose it's the obvious question: it's about computers. We are getting bigger and bigger computers. They are now planning the fifth generation of computers with, you could say, artificial intelligence. From a Buddhist point of view, could a computer conceivably possess life? consciousness?

S.: From a Buddhist point of view, nothing is impossible. What is a computer? It is a machine. One could look upon the human body as a machine; it is a very, very complicated machine. There is the possibility, it would seem, or so I understand, that you may get computers which are as complicated as human bodies. In that case, it is not impossible it doesn't seem illogical to suppose that you may even find a consciousness arising in dependence upon that machine, if that machine has reached the same degree of complexity as the human body. It doesn't seem impossible, but we shall have to wait and see whether that does actually happen. Computers are multiplying at a tremendous rate multiplying like rabbits or mice. They might soon start multiplying even more rapidly than that; and no doubt we can then place the affairs of the world in the hands of our computers with complete confidence that they won't, probably, make the same mess of it that human beings have made, in many respects. Then we can no doubt allow our computer to look after us and feed us and clothe us and think for us, just like the Pope, only much more efficiently! (Don't forget, Cardinal Manning said: 'I don't think; the Pope does my thinking for me!') So I don't think; my computer does my thinking for me, just as my pocket calculator does my calculating for me. We shall just have to wait and see, I think that is the answer, maintaining an open mind. My feeling is that even the most elaborate computer will not actually be tantamount to the physical human organism; but that may just be my blinkered, conditioned way of looking at things. We shall just have to wait and see. I am quite happy to do that; though I must confess to a certain amount of scepticism as to whether a computer will ever think. Yes, it will think logically; yes, it may even be able to produce prose works of considerable excellence. What I very much doubt is whether a computer will ever be able to write a poem. Yes, you may teach a computer to versify and produce little rhymes, even quite elaborate and long ones; but whether you will ever get a real, original poem out of a computer, I think that will be the test.

Dharmadhara: Continuing this ...: would it be able conceivably to attain self-consciousness, or even Go for Refuge? (Laughter.)

S.: Well, before it attained self-consciousness it would have to attain consciousness; before it could attain consciousness it would have to attain life, or achieve life. So let us wait and see whether the computers come alive first, and if they succeed in coming alive, perhaps consciousness may develop; and if consciousness develops, perhaps reflexive consciousness [may develop]; and if that happens, well, of course, anything can happen. But let us just keep our eye on our computers and [337] see if they come to life those of us who have computers, that is to say; well, everybody does! well, there is at least one person in this room who doesn't have a computer!

Dharmadhara: Is life synonymous with consciousness?

S.: No, because, from a common-sense point of view at least, there are things which are endowed with life which are not endowed with consciousness at least, not with reflexive consciousness.

Dharmadhara: Is life synonymous with sense-consciousness?

S.: No, because you can have angels alive. Angels are living things, but they don't have physical bodies.

Dharmadhara: Never met one.

Gerry: I was going to ask you if a computer could Go for Refuge.

S.: If ?

Gerry: I was going to ask a question if you could have a mechanical WBO, but it has already been asked.

Pavel: According to some science fiction writers, the biological age will be followed by an electronic age in which computer beings will be free of certain fetters like sex or greed or delusion; they wouldn't make wars against each other and so on

S.: Unless they were programmed to do that.

Pavel: so, at a higher level of consciousness, they can program to develop themselves, so mankind based on biology and hindered by many unskilful habits probably is not the last word in evolution and not the best, actually.

S.: Well, personally, I have never said that man is the last word in evolution; but whether we will develop from man, if one can use the expression 'from man', in the direction of the computer or in the direction of the Buddha, or whether in fact the computer might not turn out to be the Buddha or the Buddha the computer it is difficult to say. But no doubt there is at least the possibility of some development higher than that which we have at present achieved. I sometimes wonder why science fiction writers are called 'science' fiction writers, because it seems to me to be much more imagination than science.

Pavel: They actually are not science fiction. The one I have in mind is rather philosophical science fiction.

S.: It is a very interesting medium. I must confess I have read very, very little science fiction, but the little I have read I did quite enjoy.

Chairman: I think it is probably appropriate to go on to Buddhadasa's question.

S.: Is this the last one?

Chairman: This is the last question, apart from the final points.

Buddhadasa: This is a sort of composite question coming from our group. Yesterday, towards

the end of our discussion, we began discussing the [338] theme of human comedy and laughter. We wondered in what circumstances they may or may not be appropriate to the spiritual life. For example, in reading the scriptures we can see that the Buddha definitely had a sense of humour. So, first of all, Bhante:

(1) To what extent does humour have a place, if any, in the spiritual life?

(2) Is humour discussed in the Abhidharma as a separate ... for instance?

(3) Is laughter unskillful?

(4) Is there anything funny about Buddhahood?

S.: Well, let's go through those one by one.

Buddhadasa: To what extent does humour have a place, if any, in the spiritual life?

S.: Humour have a place in the spiritual life? Hm. I wonder if anybody has read *The Name of the Rose*?

Voices: Yes.

S.: That question arises there, doesn't it? whether humour, whether comedy, has a place in the spiritual life. It doesn't quite arise in that form, but whether comedy is not incompatible with Christianity or whether comedy, properly understood, would not even be the end of Christianity. The whole plot of this medieval thriller it is a very philosophical medieval thriller by an Italian writer hinges on that point, and also the lost second half of Aristotle's *Poetics*, which is on comedy, comes into it. Apparently one of the leading characters in the book takes the view that comedy really is not only incompatible with Christianity but a menace to it, and had better be suppressed. Jesus was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, and he never smiled. It has sometimes been remarked [that] in the Gospels we are told that Jesus wept but we are never told that Jesus laughed. We are certainly not told that the Buddha wept; certainly not when he was the Buddha; but we are told that he smiled on many an occasion. So it does seem that he had a sense of humour, but it was a subtle sense of humour, not unlike, I think rather, the sense of humour of Socrates; he had a sense of irony, perhaps, rather than a sense of humour in the strict sense. A subtle sense of humour, at least, one might say. I would say a sense of humour in this sense is the expression of a perception of incongruity and in a way, therefore, of a sense of proportion. So I think every sane person, inasmuch as every sane person has a sense of proportion, has this subtle sense of humour, this sense of irony. I think that is a quite different thing from a sense of humour in the music hall sense, let us say. Some people, if they see a fat man slipping on a banana skin, laugh uproariously; they think this is absolutely so funny, they can't contain themselves. But that is humour in a rather different sense; not perhaps a very positive sense, because someone might be getting hurt. So I would say that, yes, a sense of humour is definitely a part of the spiritual life, in the same way that sanity, in the same way that a sense of proportion, is a part of the spiritual life; and in that sense it is certainly found in Buddhism. What were the other questions? I think they have probably been more or less answered by the answer I have just given.

Buddhadasa: Is humour discussed in the Abhidharma at all? for instance, -

[339]

S.: There is a reference to the smile, or the laughter the word is the same of the arhant, which is said to be karmically neutral. He doesn't create karma not even good karma with his smile; it is something purely spontaneous. That is the only discussion that I can remember. The Buddha, of course, condemned loud, braying, asinine laughter which showed the teeth. He said this was more like madness. So that is more like the music hall type sense of humour, the expression of it.

Buddhadasa: That comes as the third question: is laughter unskilful?

S.: Well, it can be, because you can laugh at someone in a very unkind, even cruel, way. So it certainly is possible for laughter to be unskilful. I must say in this connection that this is one thing I have noticed I noticed it some years ago, originally at Order meetings. Very often at Order meetings a laugh goes round, but I noticed some years ago, I started noticing, that, at Order meetings at least, the laughter was always happy and innocent laughter, which was not at anybody's expense. And I realized that you very rarely heard that sort of laughter in the outside world, if perhaps ever. I thought that very significant at the time. But it does seem quite an exceptional thing, that you can have a happy, innocent, quite hearty laugh which is not at anybody's expense; which is therefore, one might say, even purely skilful, as an expression of joy and happiness. I am not saying that all the laughter that occurs, say, at an Order meeting is invariably of that type; perhaps not. But certainly this other kind of laughter that I have mentioned is quite characteristic, I would say, of Order gatherings.

Buddhadasa: Finally: is there anything funny about Buddhahood?

S.: Funny about [it]? Well, that raises the question: 'For whom?' Because, if there was something funny about Buddhahood, it would have to involve some sort of incongruity, some sort of disproportion in Buddhahood. So I don't see how an unenlightened being could find, therefore, anything funny in Buddhahood, though of course a Buddha might. A Buddha might think it a great joke that he had spent all those billions of years as an unenlightened human being, and put himself through all that suffering, and here he was, a Buddha, as it were above [all that]; what a fool he was not to have got there several billion years earlier! A Buddha might have a good hearty laugh over that; but I don't think anyone else would be in a position to do so.

Tony: Just referring to laughter, Bhante; I thought I read somewhere in the Buddhist scriptures something similar to what you said before about I think I remember a reference to dancing and laughter. [The Buddha] described dancing as utter craziness, I think, and laughter as absolute madness. And when one is happy, all one should need to do is smile.

S.: There is a passage like that I think I have quoted it; I mentioned it even just now: the Buddha said laughter which shows the teeth is madness. He meant what I call this braying, asinine type of laughter. I don't remember any reference in that same connection to dancing; but dancing, of course, was as it were prohibited. I believe that there was no such thing then as what became known as Indian classical dance. It was probably something more like what shall we say? I don't think it was actually performing oneself but watching dancing girls dance, which clearly wouldn't be a very skilful thing for any kind of monk or spiritually

committed person to do. But, again, in Tibet they have the so-called lama dances, which of course have a quite different significance. I think actually I don't know whether this has ever been mentioned; it probably has, there must be a book about it somewhere laughter does have a quite tonic effect on the system, I mean the physical organism. I mean laughter which is quite hearty and which even as it were convulses you physically; this does have a [340] definitely tonic effect inasmuch as it releases a lot of energy, possibly in some cases energy that has been blocked. So I think laughter of that sort is definitely to be encouraged, it is a quite healthy thing. I think you might even say that someone who never laughs is probably not in a very healthy state; perhaps not even physically. But you shouldn't try to guffaw all over the place; it must be spontaneous, it must be genuine sort of laughter, a genuine expression of humour. One thing I really dislike I was asked some time ago what things had annoyed me, and I couldn't think of many at the time but I afterwards thought of quite a long list! (laughter) and one of them just occurred to me: when you listen to a radio programme and some halfwitted comedian makes a very feeble joke, and there are these roars of hearty laughter from the studio audience. That rather annoys me, because it is so put on, it sounds put on, it is so artificial it is really dreadful. Because, when you think of it, laughter is something which, by its very nature, is spontaneous and natural; so when you get people indulging in this very forced hearty laughter at some wretched joke which doesn't even deserve a snigger, it perverts an essentially natural function, which is not a very pleasant thing to see or to hear. Do you see what I mean? Sometimes they laugh even before he has said anything funny they jump the gun a bit, or they laugh just in between, when he isn't even speaking. It sounds really peculiar, quite mad. But I suppose someone comes on the stage, before the red light goes on, and tells them that that is what they have got to do. They get in for free, so I suppose they do it.

: Now we know how you spend your spare time, Bhante.

S.: What, being annoyed?! Well, I have gathered some quite miscellaneous experience in my time. I like to keep an eye on the goings-on of the world.

Dhammarati: Just trying to think of some examples. Towards the end of the Vajrasattva mantra there is that burst of laughter.

S.: The so-called transcendental laughter, yes, indeed.

Dhammarati: And in the Zen tradition, a lot of the writing is supposed to be funny. I can think of these modern pictures; there are two sages creasing themselves, bending double, holding each other up, and ... S.: Are you sure they weren't drunk? (Laughter.)

Dhammarati: And a question: I have always found Shantideva ..., especially on something like the perfection of patience, really funny. I have always wondered whether it was deliberately so, or just

S.: Ah, no, I think it is intended quite seriously. (Laughter.) I have mentioned this before, but I will mention it again; perhaps we are beginning to wind up now. When I came back to England in 1964, this was one of the biggest surprises that I had how humourless the Buddhist movement was then. When I started giving talks at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, as my habit was, I just made the occasional joke, just to illustrate a particular point, and people just didn't respond; some of them couldn't believe their ears, that a bhikkhu would

actually make a joke! It just wasn't done, they weren't used to that; they were used to serious talks on Buddhism. Some of them appreciated the joke, and they were going to laugh but they checked themselves 'Oh, no, he couldn't have meant that as a joke. We shouldn't laugh.' It was really quite strange. But they got used to me some of them did, anyway! But I think that was one of the things that some of them, at least, chalked up against me: that I had a sense of humour! Well, I thought it was a sense of humour; maybe I was mistaken! I must say that I found in the East that many bhikkhus, especially Sinhalese bhikkhus, had quite a sense of humour; at least they had that, even if they [341] weren't very highly ethical or spiritual, but they did have a sense of humour. And the Sinhalese bhikkhus in particular were very, very fond of puns. Many of those whom I knew were English-speaking, and though English wasn't their mother tongue they were extraordinarily skilful at making puns in English. I could never do it like that. I can't remember any of them, unfortunately, but they used to quite spontaneously come out with these puns in speaking English. They used to love it; it was a sort of game that they used to play. So at least they had that quality.

Jarmo: In the Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava, it says that Padmasambhava is a good dancer. Doesn't he sort of dance in the cremation grounds?

S.: Yes. There is of course a form, Padmanartesvara, isn't there, the Lotus Lord of Dance? That again is rather a different sort of thing. It is a sort of, what shall we say, symbolical dance, ritual dance? It is not dancing in the ordinary, secular, mundane sense.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, I was just a little unclear as to the distinction between convulsive laughter and laughter which is like the braying of the ass.

S.: I think sometimes they overlap a bit. But before you really get on to the spiritual path, in some cases, especially in the West, you need to loosen up a bit psychologically. So it may be that, in the interests of your eventual spiritual development, you may even have to be permitted to bray like an ass occasionally, just in the same way that you may have to be permitted to indulge in certain other things that aren't exactly spiritual, just to loosen you up a bit and free your energies and then get you, hopefully, on to the spiritual path. But I think, in any case, as you develop spiritually, as you become more refined, your expressions whether in the form of laughter or in any other form will become progressively more refined. You can't really imagine a Buddha, for instance, laughing like a jackass, as we say. A Buddha smiles. It is a subtle, refined sort of smile. In Western art, of course, there is the Leonardo da Vinci smile. I don't think the Mona Lisa is a particularly good example of that. I think a much better example is to be found in that is it a sketch or a drawing? in the National Gallery: the big one

Dhammarati: St Anne?

S.: St Anne, with the Virgin Mary and Christ. I think that is a much more beautiful, much purer sort of smile. There is nothing like that, I think, in the whole of Western art; to find any parallel you have to go to Eastern Buddhist images; perhaps Khmer images especially. D. H. Lawrence, of course, speaks in favour of what he calls the pure Etruscan smile, doesn't he? He thinks that is far better than the Leonardo da Vinci smile. Perhaps it is a matter of taste. He said in one of his poems: 'Leonardo only bungled the pure Etruscan smile.' But, again, that is probably just a matter of opinion.

Jay (?): This is another digression. I was just wondering how you pick new Order Members'

names?

S.: How I pick them? Well, first of all I observe the [future] Order Member, if I haven't observed him before usually I have and I just try to see what name would suit the sort of person I see. It doesn't necessarily express his character. It may express his character, something quite deep in his character; or, on the other hand, it may express some particular quality I feel he especially needs to develop. It is usually one or the other of those. But usually I think about that particular future Order Member, keep him in mind, and just try to see what he is really like, especially on the deeper level, and then a name sort of emerges, sometimes quite spontaneously. Sometimes I think that he needs that sort of I know what the meaning should be in English, and then I have to look around and see [342] if there is a decent Sanskrit equivalent for that. That is sometimes difficult. Recently I was reading a translation of a Mahayana sutra from the Sanskrit into the Chinese and from the Chinese into English; there were such beautiful names there, I really wished I could give some of those names to Order Members, but they were so long! Some of them were a whole line of print long. I could in some cases render them back into Sanskrit, but they would be of 10, 12, 14, 16, 20 syllables! So no, we try to limit ourselves to four, or at the most five. I really regretted that I couldn't give names like let me try to think of one 'Great King ruling the Thunderbolt with the Glorious Crown Crowned with Lunar Beams,' or something like that (laughter). They are of that sort. Or 'Bodhisattva Moonlight Youth whirling the Dazzling Earrings and the Beautiful Smile crowned with Enlightenment.' There are so many Bodhisattvas with those sort of names; oh, what a pity we can't make use of those names! Maybe in the future we can, but I think not just now. We should have to confine ourselves to quite simple names, like Suvajra and I was going to say Prasannasiddhi, but that's a bit more difficult! But, yes, that is how I come to think of names. Some names suggest themselves pretty quickly; others, in some cases, I am pondering on someone's name for a week. And Prasannasiddhi sometimes wonders why I have gone all silent during our afternoon walks; that is very often the reason!

Chairman: Barry, did you have a point?

Barry: Yes, it was back on humour again. Last week in our study group, we started to practise the frivolous speech Precept (laughter).

S.: You practised the abstention from frivolous speech! (Laughter.)

Barry: And I found it quite hard to draw the line between when a joke wasn't frivolous and when it is frivolous.

S.: Well, I think if you have any doubt, conclude that it is frivolous! Just to be on the safe side, as it were. But on the other hand you mustn't curb your natural spontaneity too much, and no doubt with more and more spiritual practice your energies, including your sense of humour, your laughter, will become more and more subtle, refined, in a quite natural sort of way. Just so long as not too many hearty guffaws escape you!

Tape 33, Side 1

Jarmo: Sometimes Pujas ... laughing. Some people find it a bit embarrassing and other people find it very ... Do you think that ?

S.: I used to have this problem, not personally but with my Tibetan students in Kalimpong. It was quite a problem sometimes, because they just couldn't stop giggling; they would have to leave, or be sent out. It usually happened when they started looking at each other. I came to the conclusion myself, in the end, that they were all young men and mostly novices, and it was actually excess of not fully integrated and sublimated sexual energy; just as you get with girls in a girls' boarding school the same sort of thing. And I think perhaps it is not a great ... we tend to get this in the course of our Tuscan retreats. I don't think we get it quite so much back home, as it were; but we certainly do get it here. I think probably the reason is of that kind. There is a lot of energy, and perhaps quite a lot of it is quite straightforward sexual energy that is not finding, perhaps, its normal expression; at the same time it is not being fully integrated and sublimated, and it spills over sometimes in this way.

Chairman: The last point is something that is communicated from all the groups in our study leaders' meeting. It transpired that all the groups, and all the leaders, [343] found the study of this particular text very difficult. Some of the groups have found the text rather pedantic in its system of classification, and found it difficult to study for that reason, because they perhaps keep getting lost in the classifications of the classifications of the classifications. We wanted to know what were your reasons behind our studying this text; why this text? [It is one that] you have already studied before, and there are seminars [dealing with] several of the chapters.

S.: I think that the main reason is that it is becoming quite difficult to find suitable texts to study; because, if it is something new, I really need to begin by taking the study myself, whereas, in the case of this text, I have covered the relevant chapters with at least some Order Members before. At the same time, the subject matter is that of the spiritual Path, the spiritual life, leading up to the Going for Refuge. But I think we are going to have this sort of difficulty until we produce our own textbooks. I think people did find it easier to study the Mitrata Omnibus, and I think we need a series of works of that sort, a series of works produced by Order Members or edited by Order Members, for the needs of the Movement. I think, in many cases, the texts that have come down from tradition at least in the form in which they have come down do not completely meet our needs. Nonetheless, perhaps also there is the point that the study group leader needs to be very familiar with the text, knowing the ins and outs of the text, so he has the framework, the divisions and subdivisions and sub-subdivisions firmly in his mind throughout and doesn't ever get lost. Even so, I think in the long run we need to have our own textbooks, or at least our own anthologies of seminar extracts. Subhuti, or rather the team in Norwich, is putting together a systematically organized anthology of extracts from seminars, covering quite a large number of important aspects of Buddhism. It will be almost like a sort of greatly enlarged and expanded Mitrata Omnibus. Perhaps that will be useful on future occasions, as and when it is brought out. But I have also been thinking about study in the context of the Tuscanies generally. It may be that we need a completely different format; maybe this is something that the team can discuss, or at least the relatively permanent members of the team can discuss, in due course. Any further points in that connection?

Chairman: No further points at the time, unless the other leaders have.

: What about the study of the Survey or The Three Jewels sections out of them?

S.: One can, of course, always do that. I tend to think that people have gone over it many, many times and perhaps that they want something new; that they don't want to go over the

same material again and again.

: My personal experience is that those texts are not actually studied that much.

S.: I think possibly, leaving aside the Mitra Study Course, study around the Movement is a bit uneven. Perhaps certain people have gone through the Survey many times with, perhaps, different Order Members; others might never have read it, even. Sometimes one does find that; because sometimes even an Order Member writes to me from solitary retreat someone who has been an Order Member five or six years and says: 'I have at last got around to reading the Survey.' So I think that also presents a difficulty, that not everybody has read the same things; not everybody, even, has read the Survey to the same extent. Perhaps at the beginning of the Selection Retreats, a thorough survey needs to be made of what [344] people have read and what they have not read, and perhaps an effort should be made to fill in any important gaps. I am sometimes surprised at what people haven't read, and also sometimes surprised at what they have read. What they have read has not necessarily been Buddhist literature!

Chairman: Any further points?

S.: But just a point from as it were the study group leaders' point of view I think it is one of the most important functions of the study group leader to bring the text to life, even if it is a bit dull or dry in some cases, or even if it is rather rigidly or even pedantically structured; I think it still can be done, because a lot of Buddhist literature is structured in that sort of way; that is the way it has come down to us. Many of the Pali suttas are structured in that sort of way. So I think a definite effort has to be made to in a way break through that, to bring out whatever point is of relevance in connection with that particular passage or section in a living and interesting way. I know this isn't always easy. Perhaps this does involve more previous thought and preparation than study group leaders sometimes find is possible.

Prasannasiddhi: Bhante, have you given thought to the possibility of an Order study course?

S.: I think some Order Members are following the Mitra study course, aren't they? Because they have got to catch up with the Mitras, it seems. But, yes, I think sooner or later. In some ways, in a limited way, I do this already, or at least I have started doing it with the Chairmen, because I take the Chairmen, plus two or three others who are not technically Chairmen, as representing the senior and responsible body, and also, broadly speaking, those who know most about the Dharma and have got most experience of it; and I have been trying to take them a stage further, or go into things rather more deeply with them, as I did recently in connection with that book, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka*. We were able to explore some very interesting issues. By the way, in the new Newsletter, which I received the other day, there is a write-up by Tejananda of that study seminar. It is quite a short one, but it is a really excellent write-up. He has grasped some of the most important points that arose there very clearly indeed, and has presented them in a very trenchant way. So I really suggest that when people do get around to reading their Newsletter, they pay special attention to this. You might miss it; it is right at the back, and it is just headed 'Chairmen'; you might think that it isn't very interesting, but it is one of the most interesting well, I found it the most interesting item in the whole Newsletter. But it is headed just 'Chairmen', and it is in very, very small print. But please don't miss it; it is quite important, and he does discuss very adequately, though very briefly, some of the most important issues that were raised, and he has clearly got a very

firm grasp of them himself. I was very encouraged to see that. So no doubt through the transcribed, even if unedited, version, and through the Chairmen and others themselves, something will percolate down through the rest of the Order. But perhaps something more of this nature does need to be done.

Jarmo: Should we use the original texts alongside the translations in the study as well? like the Sanskrit one?

S.: Well, if you can, if you are in a position to do so. In the case of the Pali texts, fortunately we have got them all in Roman characters, and even someone with a very little knowledge of Pali indeed can at least check up what are the technical terms in the original language and then look them up in the dictionary; then you are not totally dependent on the English translation. I know Subhuti and a few others now do this and are able to do this. So that, for instance, when you come [345] across the word 'volitions' in a translation from a Pali sutta, you just find the corresponding passage in the Pali text and you find out what term 'volitions' is translating ah, it is samkharas well, then you are on firmer ground; you know what that particular passage is really all about. Because one particular translator may render it 'volitions'; another renders it as 'karma formations'; and another renders it as something else, and you are not always quite sure where you are. But if you can refer to the original text, or at least to the main technical terms in the original text, as I said you are on much firmer ground. Unfortunately, there are very, very few Buddhist Sanskrit texts available in Roman characters; you have to learn the devanagari alphabet to be able to decipher them.

Dhammarati: May I just go back a step to this business of percolation? It seems to me that one of the main problems with material, especially material that you have taught, is this segregation I mean it is in a way a privilege being on this retreat both ... asking questions, even ... Suvajra, Vessantara, Buddhadasa, who ... very familiar with your thoughts and things. But the actual efficiency(?) of getting that material out seems awful.

S.: Well, a lot of material is available; a lot has been produced by Cittapala, hasn't it, in unedited transcript form? And the tapes are available. So actually there is a lot that one can read and listen to, even though there is still a lot more to be done. I think now Cittapala has had transcribed well over half of the taped material.

Dhammarati: Even then it has been interesting on this retreat, because for a four or five-page chapter we have had to read about 250 pages of seminar material, maybe two-thirds to three-quarters of which has only tangential importance to the actual text. And it seems that there isn't any mechanism to select important material, collating it and distributing it.

S.: In a sense, there isn't. I think that is mainly because there aren't the people to do it. We are very short of people, even for transcription. We are quite short of people, we are short of typists. There are these sort of practical difficulties.

Dhammarati: Even information coming from the Chairmen's meeting seems very ad hoc; there is no clear system for spreading the information.

S.: Yes, right. I suppose the only long-term solution is to have everything transcribed, edited, and published in book form. This is beginning to happen, but I don't think it is going to be finished, or even perhaps properly begun, in my lifetime; there is so much material. I would

like to do it all myself, but I don't think that is possible. But a few people are becoming able to edit. This is one of my more pleasant discoveries over the last year, that actually there are a few people in the Movement who are able to edit seminar material and lectures adequately, to a standard that satisfies me; so that I just have to glance through them, just to give a final check, and nothing more than that. This is a quite new development during the last year. There are some people who edit excellently. Virananda is very good; Philip is very good the Philip who is present here; Sridevi is good; and there a couple of Joyce Mumford is very good, and another lady whose name I forget, another Joyce, I think Stone; they are all becoming able to edit by themselves, and this is going to be a very great help. And, of course, we have got the team of ladies in Norwich who are selecting material from all the transcripts, and even from tapes, for Mitrata. They have got that pretty well organized now, and able to, if Subhuti, say, wants material illustrating, let's say, Perfect Speech, or something on False Speech in particular, they can go straight to the transcripts and the tapes and lay their hands on whatever has been said by me on that particular topic, and produce it. So that has become now quite well organized. But there is so much material. I estimated that, if it is all transcribed and edited, I think already there is at least 60 very large volumes; [346] not less than that; it could be much more now. That is a lot of work. And it needs editing, because sometimes things I have said, as it were, off the cuff, need to be put a little bit more clearly, a bit more precisely, sorted out a bit, the repetitions ironed out, everything made more succinct, more neat. Sometimes I may slightly misquote, when I am quoting from memory; that has to be checked, and references given. Or sometimes, given the nature of the situation, I only half deal with a particular topic; I need to expand, sometimes, what I have said. So all this means quite a lot of work. But sometimes I myself find it quite difficult, sometimes even impossible, to tell to what extent what information, what knowledge, has percolated down through the Movement. Sometimes one finds a person here or a person there with a surprisingly good knowledge of transcripts and seminars; and here and there other people that you thought were well read with very great big gaps in their knowledge. For instance, in New Zealand there is someone like Aniketa who just spends, I think, half her time listening to tapes, and she has now absorbed an enormous amount of information; has got a very good knowledge of that material. And there are two or three others like that. But again there are some quite prominent Order Members who have got, as I said, great big gaps in their knowledge of the Dharma and who aren't very well up in some of the material. So I think the knowledge is spread very unevenly, as it were, throughout the Movement. There are some Mitras who have a better knowledge of all this material, or the Dharma generally, than some Order Members.

Bram: Bhante, is there any particular area of Buddhist literature that you would like to recommend for private study?

S.: Oh dear. It would seem to depend to a great extent on the person. Recently I have been thinking that I would like to see people becoming better acquainted with the different versions of the biography of the Buddha; especially as one has been very recently translated, or translated from a French translation from the Sanskrit, but it is very well done: that is the Lalitavistara. I got some copies to Padmaloka recently. It has been excellently done, produced by Dharma Publishing; that is Tarthang Tulku's organization. It is very well done indeed, very readable. I would like to see people reading more biographies of the Buddha, acquainting themselves more intimately with the different traditions of the Buddha's life; different episodes, different anecdotes, incidents.

Bram: Are there certain parts of the scriptures that you would like to recommend?

S.: But again it is a question: to whom? There is the Dhammapada, the Sutta Nipata, Majjhima Nikaya, Digha Nikaya, Mahavastu; there is the Sutra of Golden Light; there is Vimalakirti Nirdeśa, Astasahasrika; the Saddharma Pundarika. One would like people to know all these. It is not impossible, when you consider the amount of fiction people read, or the amount of poetry they read, even the amount of science fiction they read; they could certainly acquaint themselves with 25 or 30 volumes of Buddhist sutras fairly adequately. It is not all that difficult. Some of them are very inspiring. Perhaps people need to do a lot more study on their own. I think at present in the Movement Order Members and Mitras alike tend to rely much too heavily on the formal study periods, and not do sufficient study outside those periods sometimes just for lack of time. But perhaps that involves a reconsideration of one's priorities. I have sometimes been quite alarmed at the small amount of study that Mitras do in some centres quite alarmed; I have been raising my voice in protest for the last couple of years now, quite frequently. Anyway, we have gone over time already, so perhaps we should leave it there.

Chairman: OK. Thank you, Bhante.

Voices: Thank you.

Spellchecked and put into house style Shantavira January 1999