

# Seminar on Doctor Samuel Johnson's "An Ode to Friendship"

**Held at:** Padmaloka on February 13th, 1983

**Those Present:** The Venerable Sangharakshita, Dharmacaris Subhadra, Ratnaprabha, Mangala, Cittapala, Vajrananda, Prasannasiddhi and Subhuti.

*Transcriber's Note: Although this seminar has been transcribed again since its first publication, as it needed a large number of changes and corrections, the original page numbers have been kept so that those using an earlier index can still find quotations in the same places. This means that the text on some pages will end at a different point on the page than it does on some other pages.*

## Day 1 Tape 1 Side A

**Sangharakshita:** Today's study is something of an experiment because as Vajrananda mentioned this was his first non-Dharmic study text I think this is the first time I've taken a non-Dharmic study text in this sort of way as far as I can remember. But it is as it were part of or maybe the beginning of our attempt to bring certain works of Western literature within the orbit, so to speak, of the FWBO, to draw from them whatever is useful and inspiring for our own purposes and especially in the course of the last few months we have been thinking and talking quite a lot on the subject of friendship, especially spiritual friendship. But obviously one can't really understand much about spiritual friendship until one has had some understanding to begin with of friendship itself. That would seem to be the basis. It did occur to me some months ago, that we ought perhaps to study different texts drawn from Western and maybe Eastern literature too dealing with this subject of friendship and I hope we can get around to that in the course of the next couple of years. So this is to be viewed perhaps as a bit of a pilot project, a very small sort of foretaste of what we may well be experiencing then when we study some of those major contributions to Western literature by various distinguished writers on the subject of friendship.

Samuel Johnson is of course a very well-known, I won't say writer so much, but well-known figure in English literature. According to the encyclopaedia which I consulted a little while ago, he is probably along with Shakespeare, one of the two best-known figures in English literature. The comment was made 'figures' - not that his works are the best known, by any means, but he is probably, along with Shakespeare, the best known figure in English literature. And also his sayings and even some of the things he has written are fairly widely quoted. Very well-known, I mean, for instance sayings like "Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel." That comes from Johnson, and "Second marriages represent the triumph of hope over experience" also comes from Johnson, who did once consider a second marriage. And so on, there are dozens of these sayings which are very, very well-known indeed. It is perhaps not always appreciated about Johnson that we know a great deal about him, not only through Boswell's well-known biography, but through other biographies and sources, too, that he was what he himself would have called 'a very clubbable man', he sort of coined this word clubbable, that is to say a man who is apt to associate with other men in clubs and enjoys doing that, enjoys conversation, he enjoyed friendly exchange, he enjoyed discussion, even heated argument, repartee. He loved all these things. He in fact... I think he once said that a tavern chair... meaning a tavern... you know a room in a tavern with his friends... a tavern chair was the throne of human felicity (laughter) or something to that effect. In other words, he greatly enjoyed the company of his friends and he had many very good friends, he really did cherish his friendships, he really did keep them in repair. I think that is in fact his own phrase: that one should 'keep one's friendships in good repair'. He would have been a very good friend and also was very generous, very warm-hearted, and was very, very

fond of his friends and didn't hesitate to show it. He would take a lot of trouble for his friends, would help them in any way he could. So he was quite a good example of the virtues that he recommended in connection with friendship.

So this, the poem we are going to study, which is entitled "Ode on Friendship", seems to have been written very early in life. It was almost certainly written before he was 25, it may well have been written when he was 18, or shortly afterwards. It is supposed to have been either written on the occasion of, or afterwards, reflecting on, his leaving his friend Hector, when he went up to Oxford. [long pause]

So there's actually... there are seven verses which is rather interesting as there are seven of you present. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, yes. So we'll deal with it in the usual way and first of all go through it verse by verse, with each person reading a verse and then we discuss it. So would someone like to read that first verse?

**Subhadra:**

## **An Ode to Friendship**

*Friendship! Peculiar boon of heaven,  
The noble mind's delight and pride,  
To Men and Angels only given,  
To all the lower world deny'd.*

**S:** We probably have to sort of begin this study by just making sure we have actually understood the words, because Johnson's English is not quite contemporary English. He uses his words much more precisely, with a much greater awareness of their meaning, even their origin, than we usually do today. And the meaning of some words, of course has changed a little in the meantime. So the construction of his sentences is not quite what it would perhaps be nowadays, and he doesn't write like a modern poet, obviously. But before we go into verse itself, a few words on the word friendship. I took the precaution of looking this also up in the dictionary a little while ago. It occurs to me I've never done this, which is rather interesting, because normally I do look up words in the dictionary, but though we have talked a lot about friendship over the last few months, I must confess I hadn't myself actually looked the word up in the dictionary. Perhaps we assume that we know what it means or what it's origin is. Has anybody got any idea of the etymology of the word 'friend'? Has anybody got any idea of the Sanskrit word with which it might be cognate?

**Subhuti:** Isn't that 'Mitra'?

**S:** No, I said cognate, not the... etymologically connected... I mean cousins, etymologically speaking. [pause] I'll give you a sort of hint. There can be an interchange very often between 'F' and 'P' when words travel from one language to another. [pause] Well, no, maybe it's too much to expect. But strange to say, it is connected with the Sanskrit 'priya'... **Several voices:** Ah! Hm!

**S:** Priya which means 'beloved', and this just illustrates the fact that a friend is not just someone to whom one feels the modern sentiment of friendship, but someone whom one loves. I thought that was quite interesting. I mean there are various forms of the word in Old High German and Medieval French and so on and they've all got the same meaning; a friend is a person whom one loves.

**Mangala:** Priya is p-r-i-y-a ?

**S:** Yes. I was also very interested to discover that the words 'friend' and the word 'free' are connected, because according to... what shall I say?... ancient ideas you could only love an equal, you could only love someone who, like yourself, was a free man. Hm? You see what I mean?

You couldn't love a slave because a slave was dependant upon you, you owned him, he was your property. You could love only another person who was like yourself free. So a free man was the kind of man towards whom you could experience love, whom you could take as a friend. Do you see the connection?

**Subhuti:** Did 'free' come out of 'friend'?

**S:** 'Free' came out of 'friend', it would seem, yes, which is quite interesting.

**Prasannasiddhi:** Does that mean slaves couldn't have friendships with other slaves?

**S:** I don't think it means it directly but I think it means it by implication, because a slave is not a master of himself, he doesn't belong to himself, so to speak, he belongs to somebody else. So he is not at his own disposal, so how can he enter into a relationship of friendship? You have to be free in order to be able to do that. So this could be used of course as an argument against slavery, that slavery makes friendship impossible. I don't know if it is an argument that has ever been used but it could well be used, if argument was needed.

**Vajrananda:** ...work nowadays... people don't even... (unclear)

**S:** Well, can you be a friend if you are a wage-slave? Can you be a friend if you're tied to your wife's petticoats? Or apron - mother's apron-strings? You can be a friend only if you are free to be a friend. One can look at it in that way. There's not just legal slavery, there's economic slavery, there's domestic slavery and bondage. There's ideological slavery. Is it possible to be a friend with a communist, or a Jehovah's Witness or a Seventh Day Adventist or with a follower of the Ayatollah Khomeini? Could you be friends with such a person?

Are they free to be friends? You can be friends only with someone who is free. Do you see what I mean, there are all sorts of implications here. [pause] It could be that someone who is legally a slave is capable of friendship but he would not, by virtue of his being a slave, be able to exercise it, he wouldn't be free to exercise it, or to actualise the potential to be a friend that he has.

Anyway, it is an interesting association between these two words friend and free, and '-ship' of course, I didn't look it up but it is an old Anglo-Saxon suffix... signifying an abstract quality, the quality of being a friend: friendship. It is also in worship, worship is worth-ship, it is ascribing worth- to something.

**Subhuti:** You set out by making a crucial distinction between what you call the modern sentiment of friendship and this older understanding of the...

**S:** Well, usually we would distinguish between love and friendship, but you feel the sentiment of friendship towards your friend but you would very rarely say that you loved your friend, you would be rather shy of saying that, you might be misunderstood. Doctor Johnson, it is interesting to note, in his conversation and his writings often speaks of loving his friends. He tells his friends quite frankly that he loves them. That is the language he uses, that is the expression he uses, which people would hesitate to use that sort of language now. I mean one wouldn't usually say: "I really do love him". You say: "I really like him; He's a good chap" but you wouldn't say that "I love him", you would quite easily say "I love her", but not "I love him". But that was not the usage in Johnson's day. I don't think he was exceptionally eccentric in his usage. People still used the word 'love' in connection with friendship, and in that way friendship did mean the love of your friend, or the relationship of love with your friend. Needless to say, in those sort of pre-psychoanalytical days 'love' in this context had no sexual implications at all as far as one can see. But the word 'love' was used.

**Mangala:** So what has happened? ...sexually...

**Subhuti:** Yes, what has happened and why?

**S:** Well, perhaps that's something we can't go into now. It might have something to do with the Industrial Revolution. People are blaming it all on that. It might have something to do with, you know, the whole ideology, the whole ethos of the Victorian Age. Perhaps we should beware of premature conclusions, but it is interesting that something has happened. Dr Johnson could say in a quite sort of full-blooded way that he loved his friends, he could tell Boswell for instance that he loved him without any sense of embarrassment whatever. But since those days you don't use the word in that sort of way.

**Ratnaprabha:** Christians still seem to use the word, they seem to speak of a sort of brotherly love.

**S:** Yes, but even that is qualified as brotherly love to make sure there's no misunderstanding. Dr Johnson never said to Boswell: "Sir, I have a brotherly love for you", no, he just told Boswell that he loved him. And there's no trace of sentiment. It wasn't sentimental, it was just straightforward, honest, you could say manly sort of emotion, more than liking, certainly much more than liking. 'Like', as far as I know, as far as I remember anyway etymologically is connected with 'lust'. 'Lust' originally meant a strong liking originally. [laughter]

**Subhuti:** What about the word 'love'? What's happened with that? What's its etymological...

**S:** Didn't dare to look that up. [chuckle]

**Subhuti:** Because that's a really hard [word(?)] to use.

**S:** Yes. [pause] Anyway, that's just cleared the decks for action a little bit, hasn't it. So Johnson begins by saying.... Friendship, It's an ode to friendship. Technically it's an ode, an ode not in the later Romantic sense of course quite clearly, but ode in the Latin Classical sense, it is like a sort of Horatian Ode. It's a series of verses, a series of stanzas rather of some kind. And he starts off simply by this exclamation: 'Friendship'. It's a bit... you could say it burst from like a bit of an Udana: what a wonderful thing friendship is, he is saying, so to speak. 'Friendship. Peculiar boon of heaven, The noble mind's delight and pride.' Now we at once encounter a change of usage, 'peculiar', what does 'peculiar' mean? In the 18th century it didn't mean what it means now.

**Subhuti:** Special...?

**S:** Special, yes, it's more like special. Special to - . So 'the Peculiar boon of heaven.' Boon means something like blessing or gift. So friendship is the special gift of heaven. Peculiar here doesn't mean strange or eccentric or anything of that sort. So friendship: peculiar boon of heaven, the special gift of heaven itself. Now Johnson was a man who used words very carefully. He said what he thought and he thought what he said. So if he says that friendship is the special blessing or the special gift of heaven he really means it. He means that friendship is something of a heavenly origin or as we would say: friendship is something spiritual. It isn't something mundane. It isn't something that has gone along with us, isn't something that has grown up with us from the time of our animal ancestry, animal origins. It's a higher quality, from a higher sphere as it were, it's a spiritual quality. This is what Johnson is saying. It only comes from that higher source, it's the peculiar boon of heaven. And you notice he says it's a boon, it's a gift, it's a blessing. [pause]

So 'Friendship! Peculiar boon of heaven, The noble mind's delight and pride.' It's only someone with a noble mind who can appreciate friendship, who can value friendship as it should be valued. It is the 'delight and pride' of the noble mind. That is of the person of noble mind. Such a person delights in friendship, delights in having friends, delights in being friends, in manifesting friendship, in fact takes pride in that. It's, of course a positive pride.

**Prasannasiddhi:** 'Noble', what connotations would noble have?

**S:** What do you think it would mean? Obviously it doesn't refer to aristocratic origin. What is a noble mind? We don't use this term, this adjective much nowadays, do we?

**Cittapala:** Refined?

**Mangala:** Someone bent on higher things.

**S:** Someone bent on higher things. Someone who is not mean, someone who does not stoop to mean tricks, someone who is not deceitful, someone who is straightforward, someone who is honest, dignified, upright. At the same time he is intelligent, with self-respect, honourable. Noble means all these things. One could even say Aryan! Aryan means that. It's an Aryan quality, one might say, transposing the term into the Buddha's language, so to speak. It's the opposite of slavish. [Pause] Noble also suggests unafraid, not fearful, open. It also suggests strong, independent. It suggests all those sort of qualities. So Johnson is saying that it is not an ordinary mind that can really experience friendship. Friendship is a spiritual quality, it can be experienced only by someone who has a noble mind, who takes delight in and pride in friendship. [Pause]

And then he says: 'To Men and Angels only given, to all the lower world denied.' He's saying, in effect, you don't find friendship in the sense in which he uses the term among animals. It's a specifically human quality, but not even that, it's not an ordinary human quality, it's a quality that can be ascribed only to the noble mind, to the noble person, because it's a quality that comes from heaven. It's only the True Individual, we might say, who can appreciate friendship. And an animal, an undeveloped man is not a True Individual. Why do you think this is that in our language only a True Individual can appreciate friendship, only a true individual can be a friend? Well, "A man's best friend is his dog or his mother!" But clearly one is using the term in a different sense here. Can a dog really be a friend?

**A Voice:** A dog can be loyal.

**S:** A dog can be loyal, and loyalty is certainly one of the qualities of a friend, but can a dog be a friend?

**Ratnaprabha:** Seems to be some.. this sort of free exchange between equals you were talking about is missing, isn't it?

**S:** Yes, well, can a dog understand you, understand you fully anyway?

**Subhadra:** He does understand part of you, he relates to you, a small part of you.

**S:** If you have a friend, are you looking just for loyalty? Are you looking just for a very small portion of understanding. I mean what are you looking for in a friend?

**Vajrananda:** I think probably what eggs people on to say that a man's best friend is a dog is something to do with some dogs' ability to be a sort of unswervingly affectionate.

**S:** Yes. They don't give you a fierce friendship, they give you only tail-wagging friendship.

**Vajrananda:** And it seems that 'affectionate' is equated with friendship.

**S:** Yes. That's a bit like mother's friendship. Mother is maybe your best friend in that sense. I mean, whatever you do she'll forgive you, she'll take you in, she'll feed you, even if you have committed any crime. Mother won't give you fierce friendship. She'll give you soft friendship, which is alright but it's not friendship in the full sense, in the best sense or in the highest sense. So friendship in the sense in which Johnson is using the term is a peculiarly human quality. It's not even a quality of ordinary men or, as we shall see later, of bad men. Even though Johnson goes right back to Aristotle as we'll see in a minute. So it's 'To Men and Angels only given'. The boon of friendship is given only to men and angels, only to those who are individuals. But to come back to the question I asked, why is it given only to individuals? Why is it only individuals who are capable of friendship? I mean, what is there in friendship that makes only those who are individuals capable of it? Clearly by friendship here one doesn't mean just mere gregarious warmth or acquaintanceship.

**Ratnaprabha:** If one is a member of a group, presumably one's as it were loyalty will be to the group and will be always pulled to the group and won't be free to relate fully and openly ...

**S:** You're not appreciating the other person for his own sake, so to speak, but only because he belongs to the same group as yourself.

**Vajrananda:** Awareness of other individuals.

**S:** Yes, so it would seem that friendship implies or friendship implies or friendship involves or even requires the recognition of another person as a person in his own right. You need to appreciate the other person for himself, for his own sake, for what he is. And you can't do that unless you are an individual. You can't be truly aware of him unless you are aware of yourself, i.e. unless you are an individual. So it is only an individual who can be a friend, only an individual who is capable of friendship. Only Man with a capital 'M' and Angels with a capital 'A'. Johnson says 'Men and Angels', one must of course appreciate, one must remember his Christian background. But it's interesting, he introduces angels here because it's as though he recognises or he sees friendship as a spiritual quality to such an extent that he imagines, as it were envisages it, as existing among the angels, that is to say on a higher spiritual plane altogether. It's not only something that is shared among men, it is shared among angels. Friendship has a place in heaven and one mustn't forget what heaven means for Johnson who was always quite devout and a quite pious, quite believing orthodox Christian.

**Cittapala:** It's not something which actually comes out very strongly in Christian accounts of what heaven would be like. I've never actually sort of imagined it as being kind of a friendly place.

**S:** Well sometimes we get the impression that it is a very unfriendly place, Huh? But maybe so much emphasis is placed on the fact that Heaven is preoccupied with God. You almost haven't got time to be preoccupied with anybody else, which just seems to be a bit one-sided.

**Mangala:** He's also got Men with a capital 'M'.

**S:** I think that is simply the style of the time. I won't be sure about that. In Johnson's day very often nouns were invariably given capital letters. I don't know to what extent the spelling here is faithful to the various originals. I think that it's faithful only to... If you look at, I've got for instance another early poem here, the first line says: "Ye Blooming Train, who give despair or Joy" Blooming has a capital 'B', Train has a capital 'T' and Joy has a capital 'J'; "Bless with a Smile or with a Frown destroy".

Smile has a capital 'S' and Frown has a capital 'F'. They were much more free with their capital letters in those days than we are now but one does find Men and Angels given capitals and later on, one finds Love given a capital and one finds Virtues given a capital and Happiness given a capital. [Pause]

So, 'Friendship! Peculiar boon of heaven, the noble mind's delight and pride, to Men and Angels only given, to all the lower world deny'd'. I mean, you can hardly be more emphatic than that about the nature of friendship in general, that friendship is a spiritual quality, a spiritual emotion, that friendship is possible only between what we call individuals, that friendship exists not only on earth but in heaven and that is to say on a higher spiritual plane, as well.

**Mangala:** Do you think Johnson is actually making a distinction there between levels of men, as it were. He does say 'to Men and Angels only given', he is not saying to some men and angels?

**S:** He does make it clear later on in subsequent verses that it's not everyone who's commonly known as a man who is capable of friendship. He says 'the noble mind's delight and pride', and obviously not every person has a noble mind.

**Mangala:** Yeah but maybe I just wondered if that's an assumption you can actually make here at this stage - that you can assume that because he says 'a noble mind' he therefore is assuming that all men don't have noble minds, you see what I mean?

**S:** Yes, I think this is clear from what he writes later on, yes, that he doesn't assume that all men have noble minds.

**Subhuti:** Perhaps he's saying 'to Men and Angels only given', it's sort of accessible to men, all men, even if they don't...

**S:** Rise to the opportunity.

**Subhuti:** ...rise to the opportunity, only the noble men rise to it.

**S:** Man is capable of friendship.

**Ratnaprabha:** Why does he speak of friendship as being boon and as being given rather than perhaps as we would tend to speak of one developing friendship and building it up?

**S:** Perhaps again here one must remember his Christian background. That all good things come from God, all good things come from heaven, they come as blessings, as gifts, as boons. Perhaps one shouldn't take it too literally because Johnson in his own life was someone who struggled very hard to develop certain moral qualities and he certainly didn't believe that you had to sit back and wait for heavenly grace to do whatever was necessary. But the boon does suggest something coming from a higher level, from a higher sphere. But I don't think, I'm sure in fact, Johnson wouldn't have denied that friendship can be developed, that you can work on your friendships. What he did say as I mentioned earlier on was that one should keep one's friendships in good repair, though the fact that it's a boon I think isn't to be taken literally, to be construed necessarily, but it suggests that friendship is something so to speak coming from a higher level of existence altogether. [Pause]

**Prasannasiddhi:** Could it also be that in his times Christianity would have had quite a different flavour to it than it would have in modern times? Would one be able to say that?

**S:** There's no doubt that it did. In some ways it was a rather peculiar kind of Christianity, a Christianity bordering upon theism though not in Johnson's case. A Christianity which prided itself on being reasonable, without enthusiasm, using enthusiasm in a rather technical sense, though Johnson was not like that. Yes, he did give quite a large place to reason in religious life but his own emotions were very powerfully involved in his religion. There's no doubt about that, and he certainly tried to practise his religion, there's no doubt about that either. It's a pity he didn't have a better religion to practise. One can't help thinking that as one reads certain passages in his life. He was made miserable by his religion, one might say, rather than happy, it exacerbated his sense of sinfulness, and didn't give him very much comfort or consolation. But he did quite sincerely try to practise it and to make himself a better man. [Pause]

Anyway, as I have said his general estimate of friendship is clear from this first verse. So let's just go on to the second verse. In this sense he contrasts friendship with love.

**Ratnaprabha:**

*While love, a stranger to the blest  
Parent of thousand wild desires,  
The human and the savage breast  
Inflames alike with raging fires.*

**S:** In modern times we would give the pre-eminence to love, not to friendship, but Johnson very clearly - at least from a spiritual point of view - gives the pre-eminence to friendship. He says 'While love, a stranger to the blest' the blest meaning the souls in heaven and the angels. Love is a stranger to them, they know nothing of love, they know only friendship. Love is the Parent of thousand wild desires, love gives birth to a thousand wild desires, that probably doesn't need any commentary. 'The human and the savage breast inflames alike with raging fires'. So you notice the little hierarchy that Johnson established, you've got animals and then you've got men and then you've got angels. Angels know only friendship but not love, animals know only love but not friendship, man in the middle can know either friendship or love. Friendship is a blessing but love is very much like a curse. Do you see this sort of gradation?

**Prasannasiddhi:** The word savage applies to animals, does it?

**S:** Yes, the savage breast means the hearts of animals. Friendship is common to noble men and to angels but love is common to, one might say, ignoble human beings and animals. The savage breast is the breast or the heart of wild beasts, wild animals. So in this verse he contrasts human and savage as in the previous verse he contrasted men and angels. And you notice here human and savage have got small capital letters, small initial letters, whereas Men and Angels, had capitals, there may be some significance in this. So Johnson portrays love as an essentially destructive passion. So what sort of love is he thinking of here?

**Mangala:** Blind, passionate.

**S:** Yes, he's thinking of sexual love, as usually experienced, infatuation.

**Subhadra:** ...obsessive...

**S:** If romantic love, obsessive love.

**Subhadra:** Desire.

**S:** And he makes the point that love is 'a stranger to the blest', or that the True Individual, as we might say, has nothing to do with love in this sense, love in this sense is the 'parent', the origin or the source of 'a thousand wild desires' as it inflames the hearts of human beings, ignoble human beings, and animals with the same raging fire, the same fire of passion. So for Johnson clearly friendship stands on a very different level from love, again as described by him here or defined by him here.

**Subhadra:** Love is a tricky word, isn't it? It probably seems to be that it's to mean really passionate desire but it can either be skilful or unskilful.

**S:** I think he is meaning by love here what normally passes for such in the world, because often, as I mentioned, he does use the word love himself in a highly positive sense as the sentiment or the feeling that one has for one's friend.

**Mangala:** Desire, isn't it?

**S:** It's not only a desire, it's a wild desire. In fact it's the 'parent of a thousand wild desires'. It's sort of restless, it's disturbing, it's tumultuous, it's unhappy, it's not peaceful, it's not calm and he suggests it's not noble, not even truly human, certainly not distinctively human because man shares love in that sense, with the animals. So clearly he is thinking of obsessive sexual love, one might say.

**Subhuti:** Craving.

**S:** Craving.

**S:** So this is really a reversal of the modern values, clearly a reversal of the position which friendship and love respectively occupy in people's estimation today. I think the danger is that if you describe love in this sort of way you are left with the impression that friendship is not just something calm and peaceful, but something rather unexciting, rather tepid. Yes? That's certainly the impression that prevails today, people might agree with all that you say about love and might say well it's a very intense experience, whereas friendship is not an intense experience, that's the usual opinion, isn't it, the customary opinion? Sometimes one uses the expression or hears such expressions as passionate friendship but that tends to be a bit unusual.

**Mangala:** Why has that come about again? Why has that come about, again, the elevation of the male and female....?

**S:** I think it is not only that because even during the Victorian period there were very strong friendships between or among men. I think probably Freud has a lot to do with it, I think psychoanalysis has a lot to do with it, because Freud revealed among other things that there is a sexual element in a lot of what was previously regarded as passionate or powerful friendship, and in other words he raised the bogey, he raised the spectre of homosexuality, or what came to be called such. And of course we all know where the Western Christian tradition stands with regards to that. It's as though one has suddenly discovered that the sentiment that one had previously regarded as something really noble and uplifting was sort of dangerously infected with sexual feelings, so one sort of withdrew from it, one drew back one's friendship for that reason. Do you see what I mean?

**Mangala:** Yes.

**S:** I mean the Elizabethans, later on people like Dryden, like Dr Johnson, had no idea that there might be perhaps somewhere a sexual element in, say, one particular man's strong feeling of friendship for another man. They certainly knew about what we think of as homosexuality, but they didn't suspect every feeling on the part of one man for another as sort of possibility homosexual or possibly showing that that person had those sort of tendencies, but this is what seems to have happened after Freud's work. I think it's got a lot to do with that. Though it may not be the whole story, I think it's certainly an element.

**Mangala:** Has that been - this friendship the way Johnson sees it - has that been, say, consistent through, well say, modern Western civilisation right up until Freud, would you say?

**S:** I would say so. Well certainly throughout Classical civilisation, even Medieval civilisation, and Modern, right up to very recent times. Probably friendship was a very robust sort of emotion.

[pause ]

**Mangala:** Do you think that has, in a sense, strengthened the kind of male-female polarity and emphasised the relationship in .....

**S:** I don't think one can regard it as being the direct cause of that emphasis. I think there are many other factors at work, but certainly that factor has contributed to the strengthening of the male-female relationship, if of course it needed any strengthening. [Pause]

**Ratnaprabha:** It seems that nowadays every relationship is very entangled in one's views of it, in one's ideas of it, between a sexual and a non-sexual element. Is there any way with which one can untangle this, the way one looks at relationships?

**S:** Well, it does seem that once having eaten the apple, you've eaten it. You can never uneat it.

### **End of side one Side two**

We know about sex and we know about the pervasiveness of sexual feeling in a subterranean sort of way. I don't think we can go back on that knowledge. I think we are sort of permanently left with the suspicion that somewhere in the midst of even the apparently 'purest', inverted commas, relationships there may be some little element of sex lurking somewhere, or it may be tinted to some extent. I think we can't escape that sort of awareness. So I think really we've no alternative but face up to the fact and sort of go forward, boldly, sort of walk right through it rather than trying to avoid it. So well, even if that sexual element is there, so what! I think that is the only attitude we can adopt, or if we are going to be so afraid of sex that we avoid all those relationships, or as you put it entanglements, where sex is likely to be present or even lurking in however subterranean a way, well, we are going to limit our relationships quite seriously. Because people have been suggesting, rightly or wrongly, that even maybe your interest in children has got some sort of sexual tinge to it or maybe children's affection with their parents have got some sort of sexual tinge to it; you start keeping a dog, well maybe there is some sort of sexual tinge in it, or if you helped an old lady across a street, well maybe there is some sort of sexual interest in it! People are sort of seeing sex everywhere nowadays, well, maybe with some justification. It depends to some extent how you define sex. You can define it in such a way that it's conterminous with the whole of human experience, the whole of nature, the whole of existence [*Laughter*], you can define it in such a way that even angels are subject to it. So I think in modern times we've no alternative but not to be scared by the bogey of sex. All right, we are going to have to see it everywhere, all right, never mind. So we'll put up with it everywhere, so to speak.

**Cittapala:** But that's presumably just sort of grasping the nettle by the hand rather than actually indulging, I suppose in sexual activity.

**S:** Yes, you may actually find that in all honesty you just don't experience any sexual feelings, so you shouldn't allow yourself to be bluffed into thinking, by the experts that well there must be some sexual feeling. You can admit, academically, oh yes, maybe there is some sexual element of which I am absolutely unconscious. But if I am absolutely unconscious of it, well, for all practical purposes it doesn't exist and I can ignore it.

**Cittapala:** I suppose it's even in that particular context it's like you have this emotion which you're not quite sure what you would label as your feeling and this awareness of psychologists sort of labelling makes you contribute....

**S:** Yes, well you at least wonder, at least you sort of wonder, if not suspect that well may be there is some such element in it, but I think the point that I'm making is that one should not therefore hold back or sort of deny what one actually feels out of fear that it might in fact be something else that you are not actually even feeling at the time. You could admit the theoretical possibility perhaps and maybe take a good honest look at your feelings, but if after that sort of honest scrutiny you don't really find any sexual feeling there - one may well not find - well then one shouldn't allow oneself to be over persuaded by the psychoanalysts. If it is lurking there, that is to say sex is lurking in the sense that it is lurking in plants. You could look at a tulip with some sort of sexual feeling at the back of your mind somewhere but that doesn't really have any relevance or any significance.

**Mangala:** Presumably if you do find a sexual element there you somehow have to...

**S:** Well, to deal with it, make up your mind what you are going to do about it, whether you are going to allow it to play its part in that particular relationship or not. You don't have to go along with it on every occasion just because it's there. You might end up concluding, well, you've a sexual element in your feelings for everybody that you meet, but obviously you're not in a position to act upon it in all cases.

**Prasannasiddhi:** When you use the word sex, what are you actually referring to?

**S:** Well, I suppose one uses it in the general sense of a feeling or a tendency which if allowed to run its course would end up in some kind of genital contact or genital exchange, this is what one means by sexual, I suppose. [Pause]

Anyway, be that as it may, in Johnson's innocent mind there's no doubt that friendship is one thing and love is another, and he sees friendship as a spiritual quality, it's only the noble are capable of experiencing, and experience which man shares with the angels, and he sees love as a very dreadful, disturbing sort of experience indeed, an experience which man shares with beasts.

**Mangala:** Could we say from this that presumably sex can still be an element of friendship. In the same way that it's obviously an element in love without friendship becoming down to the level of love, as it were?

**S:** I suppose that one can say yes, that sex can be an element in friendship, but then the emphasis has to be on element. But love in this sense can't be an element of friendship, the two are contradictory, antithetical. It's possible for there to be love without sex, isn't there. Love in the sense that Johnson describes it. One can be sort of obsessed and there can be a thousand wild desires without there actually being any sexual satisfaction present. Perhaps one might not even think in those terms, one does come across strange cases of that sort occasionally.

**Subhuti:** I think a good word for what he is talking about is sexual attraction.

**S:** I think yes. I think that had he been sort of challenged on this, if one can imagine a sort of dialogue with the dead, as it were, he would have said that he regarded the two as being antithetical, that he would not have regarded friendship as having a sexual element and he would have regarded love, as defined by him, as having necessarily. I think that would have been. But it's difficult to say, he might have been more open minded than you think. He certainly knew quite a lot that didn't get into Boswell's Life of Johnson. Apparently on one occasion, according to some notes left by Boswell, he and Johnson had a very detailed and exhaustive discussion on the subject of sex, apparently going into quite explicit detail on quite a number of matters but Boswell did not even write it up in full and certainly regarded it as quite unsuitable for publication, but apparently Johnson had much to say on that particular topic.

**Cittapala:** Do you think that then sex is incidental to friendship in the sense that Johnson is using it?

**S:** Well, if it plays a part at all, it can only be a subordinate part and to that extent incidental.

**Cittapala:** Well, would you think it could actually detract from that friendship even if it was only incidental? Do you think the extent to which it did actually...?

**S:** I don't think it need detract, but I think people being what they are, it could be likely to detract, in some cases at least, but not necessarily by any means.

**Cittapala:** Because it does seem that another modern sort of idiom of behaviour is that sex comes before friendship simply because friendship takes such a time to develop and people are much more keen about jumping into bed with each other quite quickly, so in a sense...

**S:** I think that the fact that sex is not necessarily compatible with friendship is shown by the fact that there are so many misunderstandings and even quarrels etc., etc, between people who have jumped into bed with each other. A well-known fact that the most noticeable thing about many such people whether married or otherwise is that they don't seem to be very good friends. They're either sort of madly attracted or are experiencing some sort of desperate revulsion. They are either lovey-doveying or, you know, slinging things at each other. This is all rather fresh in my mind having been reading about Henry Miller's life. [Pause] It would seem to me that it's only when - in some cases - people have been reasonably happily married for say twenty or thirty years that something like friendship may in some cases begin to emerge.

**Cittapala:** It would seem then that if one was to develop friendship, when one anticipates developing friendship with somebody else, male or female, and you do have this sort of little bogey-man lurking at the back of your mind that there may be some sort of sexual attraction, in a sense, if you want to develop friendship the thing to do is to push on, really, because... to develop the friendship because that's...

**S:** Yes, to develop the friendship regardless. But I think one shouldn't assume that if you were to jump into bed pretty quickly it would sort of hasten the development of the friendship. I'd say not necessarily so, and of course in the case of friendly feelings towards women, well, in that case sex is not necessarily a little bogey, it's usually only a bogey in the case of friendly

feelings that you have for someone of the same sex. I think friendship is something one doesn't often develop with someone of the opposite sex for obvious reasons: love, or true love in Johnson's sense, love in that sense, is just incompatible with friendship. That's why I think say between married people friendship, if it develops at all, develops when love have been sort of worn out and lust is exhausted, then possibly if they are reasonably sort of decent and positive people, something like friendship may begin to develop but probably not before.

**Mangala:** But in the case of homosexuality, I mean does the same thing apply there? Say like with homosexuals, the sexual factor is always going to obtrude or be....

**S:** [interrupting] If the sexual factor is the dominant one I think there is no possibility of friendship, if the sexual factor is so important. If it's the major thing, the central thing, in any relationship I think one can't really speak of friendship in Johnson's sense.

**Mangala:** That would apply to men and women as well presumably?

**S:** Yes, yes, because one sees very often people who have had a sexual relationship, when the sexual relationship comes to an end they just don't want to know each other any more, they become like strangers. It's not that they are friends and they are just not sleeping together any more, no, in most cases apparently they just don't want to know each other. The relationship is replaced by a non-relationship. They don't just subside into friendship, by any means. Sometimes it can be replaced by a great deal of hatred. One sees that, too. [Pause]

So whether the relationship is between two people of the same sex or two people of opposite sexes, and I mean, if love bulks larger than the relationship, there can't be friendship, or there would be at best just a glimmering, not more than that.

**Cittapala:** Do you think love in the sense Johnson is using it is always characterised by this sort of turbulence and this intensity or could it be characterised by a more subtle.....

**S:** Well in a way the question answers itself because you say 'love in the sense that Johnson uses it' well, this is the sense in which he uses it. If one uses the word love in a different sense one is talking about something that Johnson is not talking about.

**Cittapala:** I was just thinking that, I mean, for instance, say, quite a lot of people's relationships as such have that sort of hallmark of what one might call a honeymoon period of intensity and of feeling, but after that that dies down. One might say that they were still - well maybe they are bored with each other but would think they probably might still actually be quite involved with each other.

**S:** They get used to each other. They settle down into a sort of routine. Roles are apportioned perhaps. But anyway what are you actually saying or trying to say?

**Cittapala:** I was just wondering whether the sort of passionate side of love, that neurotic tendency to depend upon somebody else manifests itself initially in this sort of kind of quite fervent, turbulent sort of manner but then maybe after a period of time will sort of go subterranean and sort of manifest itself in a slightly different sort of way which...

**S:** Very often it isn't so desperate because it's very desperate, say during courtship. You don't know whether you're going to get that particular woman or not, well then you get her, and then you go on honeymoon together, then you settle down. So you're less worried, you're less uneasy because, well, the question of regular sexual satisfaction comes in. She's yours, you are hers, you belong to each other, it's accepted and recognised by your friends, society, the law, and you are living together, you've got a house etc. Then you've got children, so you begin to feel a bit more sure about it all and a bit more safe, a bit more secure. So the turbulence very often dies out of your relationship, but not always. As I say I've just been reading Henry Miller's life, the turbulence never died out of his relationship, not so far, he's forty now. I'm half way through the volume.

**Subhuti:** It's not something that's died out, it's channelled, isn't it, by this secure situation because if that's removed then all the turbulence recurs.

**S:** Yes, indeed. Yes, if one day you come home from work and there's a note on the table telling you that she's gone, you can go berserk.

**Subhuti:** (unclear beginning) in Johnson's terminology there's friendship and there's love and love includes... love is sexual attraction it seems, but what we seem to have been saying is that sex can be something common to both friendship and love, so what does that leave love as? Do you see what I mean?

**S:** Hm. Well, one can perhaps put it in this way: You can have friendship without love in Johnson's sense, Hmm?

**Subhuti:** Yes.

**S:** You can have friendship, well friendship in Johnson's sense is incompatible with love, you cannot combine the two, the one throws out the other, and sex of course is a very important element in love, perhaps it's the major element. It would seem that in Johnson's conception of friendship sex has no place. Presumably, because love has no place, but if one separates the two, if one separates love, in the emotional sense, from sex, it would seem that sex can play a part in friendship, but it can be only a very, as it were, subordinate part, it can only play a very minor role. If it starts getting out of hand then it isn't friendship that one is concerned with, it's love in Johnson's sense. Do you see what I mean?  
[Pause]

But you can have... We can classify. Maybe one should work this out for oneself afterwards. You can have love without friendship and without sex, you can have love with sex and of course without friendship. You can have sex presumably without friendship and without love. You can have friendship without love and without sex, well, necessarily without love; and you can have friendship with some moderate measure of sex, but no more than that. Those would seem to be the possibilities.

**Ratnaprabha:** So what is it about love that excludes friendship in Johnson's definition?

**S:** Well, it's as though in the case of love one is no longer an individual, one loses one's self awareness, one's emotional positivity, one's sense of responsibility, love overwhelms all those things.

**Prasannasiddhi:** So love is sort of, in a way love is a state of mind, represents a state of mind.

**S:** Yes. I think the great thing we have to remember nowadays is that though we say all these things about love, we have to be very careful in as much as love is associated in our mind with strength of feeling, whereas friendship isn't. We must remember that for Johnson strength of feeling is associated with friendship. There can be such a thing as positive passion, one might say, and that is very much a part of friendship. It isn't just something tepid. We have been conditioned into thinking that all the powerful emotions sort of revolve around sex, so that if sex isn't there we're not left with very much at all in a way of emotion or in the way of feeling. Well, this is the case with regard to most people, isn't it? The relationships which are most emotionally charged are the sexual relationships.

**Mangala:** [laughing] I was just wondering what else there could be?

**S:** Well I suppose you don't come into the category of angels, that's all I can say!

**Mangala:** I mean, what are the positive passions? You mentioned the word 'positive passions'.

**S:** Well you can have a positive passion for your friends, in say the non-sexual sense of with the sexual element very subordinate. You can have positive passion for some cause, for art, for literature, for music.

**Mangala:** I'm particularly thinking with regard to a friend and another person.

**S:** There can be very powerful feelings without necessarily there being a sexual element.

**Ratnaprabha:** If you think of a soldier's loyalty to their leader or something, I suppose that could be something...

**S:** I mean, for instance, someone mentioned the other day the feelings of Nelson's sailors towards him, well yes, there must have been surely very powerful emotion there, or Alexander the Great's soldiers' toward him.

**Ratnaprabha:** And a reciprocal feeling the other way round?

**S:** Yes indeed. Well it can't be one-sided, it would seem. Nelson's sailors at least knew that he cared for them. He looked after them better than any other admiral looked after his sailors as far as I remember.

**Cittapala:** That's more akin to loyalty isn't it?

**S:** It is, yes. It is to a great extent, but the point seems to be stressed by a number of writers about Nelson that his men felt a very sort of personal attachment to him. It transcended loyalty. The sailors... all sailors were loyal to their captains, even if they got flogged, they were still loyal, but they had a feeling above and beyond loyalty towards Nelson. Something much more and personal, by all accounts.

**Cittapala:** Could you say that this positive sort of passion for another person could be rooted perhaps in just your appreciation of their qualities, their potential?

**S:** Yes right. Well, for that to be possible, they'll have to be noble, to use the term that Johnson used in the first verse and you'd have to be noble too, presumably, at least to some degree. [Pause]

Anyway, let's go onto verse three.

*With bright, but oft destructive gleam,  
Alike o'er all his lightnings fly;  
Thy lambent glories only beam  
around the fav'rites of the sky.*

**S:** Hm... One needs to emphasise Thy: *With bright, but oft destructive gleam, Alike o'er all his lightnings fly; Thy lambent glories only beam around the fav'rites of the sky.* Johnson's still talking about love and friendship. Yes? The first two lines refer to love, the second two to friendship. 'With bright but oft destructive gleam, alike o'er all his lightnings fly,' the lightnings of love, the lightnings of passion, fly over everybody. Everybody is subject to passion to some extent Johnson is saying. With a gleam that is often destructive, the lightnings of love fly alike over all. Everybody, to the extent that he is an animal, to the extent that he is a human being, is subject to love. And the lightnings of love which fly over all alike are bright, yes, but often destructive. There's a quite happy comparison because a lightning flash is something very brief but very brilliant and love is often like that and infatuation is often like that. It just strikes you like lightning, but it can be quite destructive, quite devastating. But on the other hand Johnson says: 'Thy lambent glories only beam around the favourites of the sky'. Lambent. What does lambent mean? Lambent means something like softly shining. Thy lambent glories only beam around the favourites of the sky. But the soft glories of friendship, they beam only around those who are the favourites of heaven. So he is saying in somewhat more elaborate language here, everybody is subject to some extent to love, but friendship is felt only by those who are the favourites of heaven. [Pause]

Notice the contrast between the many and the all, and the few, the contrast between the bright but destructive gleam of the lightnings of love and the lambent glories of friendship. One is like a flash of lightning and the other is like sort of beautiful calm equable sunlight. [Pause]

You notice Johnson is very precise in his language. He is always precise. He says with bright but oft destructive gleam. He doesn't say that the lightnings, that the gleam of the lightnings of love are always destructive, he says that they are often destructive. He doesn't overstate his case. He doesn't exaggerate. Do you notice that point? This is very characteristic of Johnson's whole style of writing, whether in prose or in verse, he is very precise, very accurate, he means exactly what he says and says what he means. Every word is weighed. 'With bright but oft destructive gleam alike o'er all his lightnings fly; Thy lambent glories only beam around the fav'rites of the sky.' [Pause]

**Ratnaprabha:** It does seem to be like that, doesn't it, like being in a thunderstorm? It seems there's very little one can do about it sometimes, almost like just standing there and being struck by a lightning. I suppose there are certain steps one can take like getting off the high ground. Seems often a little bit out of one's control.

**S:** One needs a lightning conductor. What would be the lightning conductor? One could say friendship, because if a lot of positive emotion is going into that, you're less likely to be struck by the lightning of love. A lot of people get involved with love because they don't see anything better. There is nothing better around, so far as they can see.

**Ratnaprabha:** So it's as if the lightning is flashing simply because one is allowing the tension to build up to such an extent that...

**S:** There's that also. This is the case. This happens in extreme cases with men who commit rape. Tension builds up until they just can't, as it were, help themselves any longer. If you're so sexually frustrated. I'm not suggesting that that the only cause of rape is sexual frustration. It's more complicated than that, but there are many cases of this sort. [Pause]

You notice also Johnson's language is not only precise, it's quite forcible. Do you notice that? Though in the style of his day, a rather Augustan style as we would say. A rather Latinate style, a style which clearly owes a lot to Latin models, Latin authors. His language is very measured, the rhythm is very measured, it's very as it were firm, quite stately. You notice the rhymes are very simple, very neat. [Pause]

**Prasannasiddhi:** Comparing this poem and its use of language with perhaps some modern poetry that one gets...

**S:** Even with some of the Romantic Poets in their weaker moments they use language in a rather imprecise sort of way, even a slovenly sort of way, but Johnson never does this. He wasn't the great lexicographer for nothing. He seemed to have had a natural instinct for the meaning of words, the weight of words, so to speak.

**Subhadra:** Incidentally, what was he a doctor of?

**S:** Laws, technically, He was made Doctor of Laws by the University of Oxford, but actually he only spent four sessions at university, he had to leave on account of poverty. He never took his degree. But when his dictionary was about to be published his friends procured him an honorary degree from his old university so that he could put the letters, appropriate letters after his name on the title page. He never actually graduated.

**Prasannasiddhi:** He's famous for writing a dictionary?

**S:** Well, among other things. He was famous in his own day perhaps most of all for his dictionary and his essays called 'The Rambler', which we would regard nowadays as rather heavily moralistic but they are beginning to be more appreciated. Perhaps his most popular work on the whole is 'The Lives of The Poets', which he wrote when he was quite old, over seventy. I was going to say the most readable of his works, but that in a way doesn't do him justice, it's the most accessible of his works, let us say, to the modern reader. Most of his writings are very much concerned with moral issues. In his own day he was regarded as the great moralist, as well as the great modern lexicographer. He also edited Shakespeare. And he wrote a few quite famous poems. Anyway perhaps we should stop at this point for a cup of tea; he was also a great tea drinker, and a book was once published, I think it was a book, against the habit of tea-drinking and Johnson reviewed it, criticised it very severely indeed. He's said to have drunk between thirty or forty cups of tea at a time, admittedly very small ones.

**Cittapala:** Sounds like he was slightly addicted to it.

**S:** He gave up strong liquor for many years of his life. At a time when most men, well practically all men drank strong liquor at frequent intervals throughout the day. So to a sort of keep pace with his friends apparently he either drank water or he drank tea. It's probably just as well he did drink tea because it meant that the water was boiled. In those days that was quite a consideration. Not that they knew that of course. Anyway maybe we can have a cup of tea or something now.[Long Pause]

It does seem that all the main points are made actually, if you transpose it into a slightly more Buddhistic..... *[talk about practical matters to do with the retreat followed by general tea-break talk unconnected with the text]*

**End of Tape One**

## Tape Two

[Next Session]

**S:** Right, shall we have verse one - two - three - four.

*Directress of the brave and just,  
O guide me through life's darksome way,  
And let the tortures of mistrust  
On selfish bosoms only prey.*

**S:** Do you notice anything at first sight a little anomalous about this verse, or something in this verse?

**Mangala:** I've something but I'm not sure whether it's what you're thinking of but it says **directress**.

**S:** Yes, which is feminine gender, isn't it. So is there any reason for this sudden, it's not actually a change to the feminine gender because he hasn't addressed friendship as a masculine personification, or personified in the masculine form, but perhaps one has been left with that impression, but now he says directress, that friendship is the directress of the brave and just. So why do you think he says directress, not director? I mean, the meter doesn't require it, he could just so easily have said 'director of the brave and just'.

**Subhuti:** (unclear) the feminine side of the picture.

**S:** Yes, it would seem to be something like that. Emanations. Don't forget what Blake said about men communicating, to use our expression, through their emanations. Perhaps at the back of his mind there is a sort of association with the Muses, or even with some of the Greek goddesses, with Pallas Athene, the inspirer and the encourager and even directress of certain heroes. It may be a sort of suggestion that friendship is something that lies hidden in the soul, in the unconscious, so to speak, but yes, he does speak of 'directress'.

**Vajrananda:** (unclear) friendships or people relating through their emanations?

**S:** This is something I've spoken about quoting from Blake, I can't remember the exact words of the passage but he does make it clear that men communicate through their, what he calls their emanations, what we would say is the more feminine part of himself. In other words, communication is essentially emotional, at least communication involves an essentially emotional element and without that element no real communication takes place.

But perhaps also Johnson is hinting at the fact that friendship is a very powerfully and positively emotional thing, and emotion, of course, is more associated with the feminine than with the masculine, isn't it? So if you personify an essentially emotional quality like friendship, well it is perhaps more appropriately, for some purposes at least, personified in female form. Do you see what I mean?

**Prasannasiddhi:** Is there any reason why emotions are given a feminine quality?

**S:** Well, women are usually associated more with emotions as men are more with reason. That is the sort of traditional or cultural reason, isn't it.

**Prasannasiddhi:** That would tend to subordinate emotion to reason.

**S:** Yes, that's true. This whole question of emotion and reason comes up in this context of *Paradise Lost*. I mean, therein Milton seems to regard the Fall as representing a sort of abdication by reason of its rightful position. Adam sort of embodying reason, Eve embodying emotion, but Milton is using these and not in a one-sidedly rational sort of sense, more in the sense of a higher understanding. One could say that animals have emotions, but do animals have reason? Usually reason is regarded as a more distinctively human quality than emotion. Reason in that sense seems to be the sort of growing point of human development, but not reason itself as completely divorced from emotion. [Pause]

So Johnson sort of personifies friendship here almost as a sort of female deity, and it's as though he addresses a prayer to that deity, regards friendship as a sort of guardian deity, if you like, a guardian angel, and he says: 'Directress of the brave and just. Oh guide me through life's darksome way.'

**Subhuti:** It's like an invocation.

**S:** It's like an invocation, yes, he regards friendship as, well it's almost as though he is speaking or thinking in terms of Kalyana Mitrata, he is personifying Kalyana Mitrata and he is asking for guidance from friendship through the the darksome way of life. Here he does seem to be thinking in terms of something like what we call spiritual friendship, something that would be a guide, through the perplexities of life. And not only that, he regards friendship as the directress of the brave and just. Friendship is not for cowards, friendship is not for the unjust. This links up with what he said in the first verse about friendship being the delight and pride of the noble mind. You might say that bravery and justice are sort of masculine qualities, aren't they, masculine virtues. So when in fact he is personifying friendship in feminine form, this suggests a sort of bringing together the masculine and feminine. Perhaps it wouldn't be too far-fetched to say that. It isn't enough to be brave, it isn't enough to be just, the brave and the just must be guided, must be directed on their journey through life by friendship, by that sort of positive, powerful emotion.

**Ratnaprabha:** What does it mean when one gets the feminine side in symbolism, taking this apparently more active role than the masculine side? I'm thinking of this example and also, say, when Prajna is personified as being feminine.

**S:** Well, in the case of Prajna that may well be an etymological accident. The fact that the noun Prajna is simply a feminine gender so it's more appropriate to portray Prajna as a goddess. One has on the other hand Prajna personified in masculine form of Manjugosha, but I think the feminine form usually represents the unconscious, or whatever is unconscious and not yet developed, because the unconscious is, as it were, that which is strange to you, that which is foreign to you, by its very nature you are not in contact with it, not yet in touch with it. So woman is like that, woman is something strange, something foreign, something different. So woman therefore can be the natural symbol of your unconscious or of whatever is as yet unconscious in or latent in you. Do you see what I mean? This is I think how it comes about. It is not necessarily that what is in your unconscious is feminine, it may be your masculine qualities that are undeveloped, but in as much as the female is different from, and therefore strange to, even foreign to, the men, she can be the appropriate symbol of that which is strange to him in himself, i.e. in his own unconscious,

**S:** or what is in his own unconscious, or that of which he is unconscious and it can be his own reason, even, which is not yet developed, it can be spiritual qualities.

**Mangala:** Would it not be more appropriate therefore if everybody was, say, doing the Tara practice than say visualising, well, I was going to say visualising male deities but actually they're pretty androgynous, aren't they, they are Bodhisattvas? I was thinking if you follow this argument then one would be better off visualising female forms or female symbols of...

**S:** Well one might to begin with, and also of course if you did have this feeling about women, that they were different, that they were strange, that they were mysterious. Many men don't seem to have that feeling these days.

**Mangala:** Does that mean then that maybe this symbolism isn't so appropriate today? Seeing the woman in this....

**S:** Well, it may not be so appropriate, but I think it is still very appropriate in the case of quite a lot of men. The woman does represent that which is unfamiliar, which is because she is herself unfamiliar, so she can represent that which is unfamiliar.

**Prasannasiddhi:** She is herself unfamiliar. What would that be? She sort of doesn't have her own mind?

**S:** No, I mean unfamiliar to the man.

**Prasannasiddhi:** Oh I see. I would have thought that the men would have woman pretty well figured out. It should be fairly obvious.

**S:** Quite a lot of men don't. The exceptional man perhaps does but I think the majority of men don't. They're very far from having woman figured out. Maybe figured out theoretically but not really in practice, not really in life itself, I'm sorry to say.

**Ratnaprabha:** So for a woman, would the symbol of something that's in the unconscious or yet to be developed tend to have a male aspect?

**S:** It would seem to be, yes. I don't want to go into Jungian psychology, it is a bit of a jungle, but this is why presumably Jung speaks of there being the *anima* in the case of man and the *animus* in the case of woman.

**Cittapala:** Does that correspond to the Blakean sort of...?

**S:** One can draw up charts and correspondences but it is not such a simple matter as that. Each term has its own context, its own flavour, its own resonance, its own associations. I think one has to be very careful not to sort of try to equate well, 'Dakini equals Emanation equals anima.' I mean, I know one can't help trying to do that but I think one must do it very very carefully, otherwise it just becomes one cliché equated with another cliché, you end up with a whole string of clichés. But obviously one does want to bring things which seem to have some similarity into some kind of synthesis but I think one needs to go about it quite carefully, otherwise it can be done just sort of mentally on a very sort theoretical and superficial sort of basis. [Pause]

So anyway, the basic point that emerges here from these

first two lines is that Johnson does regard friendship as being a guide, through the dark path of existence and, I think, perhaps we should take him quite literally, or take that statement quite literally, that friendship is a guide, I mean, for the brave and just, through the dark way, the dark path of life itself. But in what sense is friendship a guide through life? The word 'guide' is very precise, a very accurate word, it's not just comfort, it's not just consolation, not even just companionship, it's actual guidance.

**Mangala:** It suggests a hierarchy, if you like, someone more developed than others...

**S:** It suggests spiritual friendship. Johnson has spoken of Angels, and angels are sometimes represented as guides, not only messengers but guides as in the case of Tobias and the Angel Raphael. We all know about it, at least we've all seen that famous picture or poster.

**Subhuti:** It's almost as if he's suggesting it's a guide in the sense of being an ideal, that it's not just that through your friendship you get guidance, but that in trying to develop friendship you have a...

**S:** Because friendship represents a sort of a higher state of humanity itself, a higher kind of human relationship, something angelic rather than merely human or something which man shares with the angels, at least. So in trying to be a friend, in the course of trying to develop friendship, you are trying to be more human and to develop friendship is in itself a goal, it is in itself an aim or an ideal. And this comes back to the point that Mangala raised during the tea break - it has come in, you see! - whether one can, in fact, develop friendship. So what does one feel about that?

**Mangala:** That wasn't actually my question. That was Matthew's, but my question was: To what extent, if any, can friendship just be naturally there, or does it have to be... is there something intrinsic to it which means it must be constantly developed, if you see what I mean?

**S:** Well, there's no doubt that there is, as you say, something that is there, but is it friendship in Johnson's sense? In other words this really means, I suppose, can one or should one distinguish between a sort of instantaneous liking or attraction, or sympathy, can one, or should one, distinguish between that and friendship? I mean, that sort of instant attraction can be the starting-point or the basis of a friendship, but is it itself friendship? I think one of the points that has been made quite often in connection with friendship recently is that it's something that does take a long time to develop because of the element of faith and trust that comes in. So friendship by its very nature can't be a flash of lightning, can't perhaps even start as a flash of lightning, maybe it starts as a very tiny, insignificant spark indeed, though that may be just a bit of liking and we do know from our own experience that in some cases you can associate with someone for weeks and months and not even like them, no, not feel any particular sympathy or attraction but nonetheless, after quite a long while, just by virtue of your mutual associations, constantly seeing each other over a long

period of time, you actually start developing a friendship. But you never would have chosen to become friends with that person in the first place. So it does seem that that sort of instant liking, isn't essential to the development of friendship but I think equally there's no doubt that sometimes it does start in that way, but it isn't itself friendship because it can be a number of other things, it can be well, just... um... sympathy, because you resemble each other to some extent or have got certain interests in common or you're in the same kind of situation, (unclear) problems. But that doesn't necessarily develop into friendship I would say. [Pause]

I think whatever sort of initial spark there may be, there's no doubt it needs to be worked upon. However much is sort of given, so to speak, I think the greater part of friendship is the product of quite conscious, quite deliberate hard work. It doesn't just happen!

**Mangala:** Yes, it's quite a reversal from certainly the way, I've always thought about it, like you know, you are either friendly or you are not almost, and I suppose not really seeing friendship as being really like part of the spiritual path. Maybe sort of incidental to it, or something...

**S:** Perhaps you've mixed up friendship and love to some extent. Because we have made the point before that, or the point has been made before that one can sort of fall in love but one doesn't usually fall into friendship. It doesn't sort of happen like that. First of all you get used to someone, then you start liking them, and then maybe some sort of warmer feeling develops, but you don't sort of fall for them right from the beginning. Sometimes you do, but then maybe there's some element, some admixture of love, not necessarily in a negative sense, with your friendship.

**Cittapala:** There do seem to be some people that you actually get on with very well and something to do where your common outlook on life...

**S:** I think that can be misleading. For instance what does one mean by "get on with very well"? Though you may speak the same of language, have the same sort of background, you may even have been to the same kind of school, and you may be, both of you, people who are socially quite at ease and are able to express yourself easily but it may not go very far or very deep. So you can strike up a sort of acquaintanceship quite readily and quite easily, but in what sense or to what extent is this friendship or even the beginning of friendship? It's more like a sort of practised sociability, sort of refinement of gregariousness.

**Cittapala:** Don't you think that it's a common experience to actually come across people who you do experience, well, somewhat immediate empathy with?

**S:** That is true, one does. I'm only questioning what that really sort of boils down to, and whether what it boils down to is necessarily a starting point for friendship in the more genuine sense, the deeper sense.

**Cittapala:** But it does seem that that's, at least in my experience, that's the basis on which most people start to develop friendship.

**S:** Oh yes, that is, to begin with, the basis on which you relate anyway. You tend to associate with those with whom you get on, so it's from among those who get on that you develop your friendships.

**Subhuti:** The essential basis for friendship is association and...

**S:** It is the indispensable precondition.

**Subhuti:** ... and liking may make you associate, but it could be something else, it could be just the fact that you worked together, you lived together, or just that you decided to develop a friendship.

**Mangala:** So friendship therefore is actually quite a high level of spiritual attainment, I suppose?

**S:** (Laughing) Well, it almost seems to amount to that, doesn't it?

**Mangala:** I mean, that puts it in a whole different kind of light...

**S:** And also it does mean that either you've got friends or you haven't, you're either lucky and have got friends or you're unlucky you don't have, and if you're unlucky, well, there's nothing you can do about it - it's not really like that at all! It doesn't depend upon your good looks, it doesn't depend upon your age, it doesn't depend upon your social position, your cultural background, your level of education. It doesn't depend upon any of these things. If you want to make yourself, or find yourself a friend you can just go out and get one. You just have to be sufficiently patient and put enough work or enough effort into it. [Pause] I mean, just like the development of any other quality of relationship.

**Mangala:** (laughing) I mean, why bother to do that? If you see what I mean. What is the motivating force to do that rather than go out and make a friend...

**S:** Well the deeper one is that you're fulfilling your human nature, you're being truly human, you're actualising yourself.

**Mangala:** But I suppose that's kind of an intellectual motivation, it's theoretical. There might not be any actual emotional impact...

**S:** Putting it in more emotional terms, you do it because you feel a need to do it, because until such time as you do it you don't feel fulfilled as a human being.

**Mangala:** Or perhaps you realise that what it is you want that fulfils you, that's perhaps the only way or one way that you're going to get it.

**S:** Just as you've got certain physical organs which are not, so to speak, at ease until they've fulfilled their normal function, in the same way you have got certain spiritual faculties, certain spiritual organs which are not at ease until they've performed their appropriate function, and one of these faculties or organs is that of friendship.

**Cittapala:** Do you think this word which Nagabodhi used at Order Weekend, 'intimacy', do you think it has any usefulness?

**S:** What does one mean by intimacy? What is intimacy? I don't feel completely happy about this word. Really it is an ambiguous word. What is intimacy? One could say that intimacy is a natural part of friendship, but intimacy is not itself friendship, I mean, it's doubtful if there can be friendship without intimacy but there can certainly be intimacy without friendship, don't you think? What is intimacy in practical terms? How does it show itself? What difference does it make if you're intimate with someone, some practical difference?

**Cittapala:** Well, you tend to share quite a lot in.....

**S:** I think it's more than that. Share, even that's a bit abstract, share what?

**Cittapala:** Well, you share specific areas of your life, it may extend to all of it...

**S:** What particular areas are you thinking of?

**Cittapala:** Well, whatever area you happen to both kind of operate in. It might be work or might be... I don't know, your various friends or...

**S:** It seems to go further than that, doesn't it? Intimacy? For instance supposing in court, in a law-case, supposing some divorce case, what is the phrase they use? Intimacy occurred. What do they mean by that? Intimacy seems to be associated very often at least with a sexual element, doesn't it?

**Cittapala:** Well, yea, I suppose it does. Not that I would have used it or understood it in that way.

**Ratnaprabha:** If people talk about intimate friends they usually seem to mean people who do just spend a great deal of time in each others' company, as a pair sort of thing, not generally in other people's company and perhaps who are very close, literally very close in terms of being very close together, and also emotionally very close.

**S:** An intimate friend in this sense would be not necessarily someone with whom you shared sexual experience, but who at least knew about your sexual experiences, I mean, between men this is usually a sign of intimacy that you tell your friend about your sexual experiences and what's going on in that area of life. If you don't, if you just don't mention all that to him, well, he may be a friend but he is not an intimate friend. I mean, the 'sexual' here representing the sort of last, little, what shall I say, stronghold of privacy. If you talk about those things you'll probably talk about anything because in our culture that is something that one tends to keep a little private or a little to oneself. So an intimate friend is presumably the friend to whom you are open about whatever things happen to be as it were taboo in your particular society. The intimate friend is the friend to whom you are willing to talk or who you don't mind knowing about those things which you don't tell to other people, even to people with whom you are on quite friendly terms, even to your relations. That's the intimate friend, it would seem. So intimacy seems to suggest that.

**Cittapala:** How would that differs from being one's spiritual friend?

**S:** So the intimate friend is the friend who you allow to know about you those things that you don't allow everybody to know, not even most friends. For instance, maybe you wear a wig. Yes? You wouldn't like your friends to know that, but your intimate friend, well, in his case perhaps you wouldn't mind. Do you see what I mean? It's something quite personal.

**Cittapala:** Wouldn't that sort of mark a stage from which one could progress towards this ideal friendship?

**S:** Yes, indeed. It is, one might say, intimacy is a form of openness, or at least it is openness on a certain level. So this is why I say that intimacy is an essential part of friendship but where there is intimacy there is not necessarily friendship, because you may tell a certain intimate fact to a doctor or to a lawyer, that doesn't make them a friend. So there's intimacy in that sense, but it's a sort of professional intimacy. But I think Nagabodhi was getting at even something more than that, by intimacy. What do you think that might have been? Otherwise you're sort of groping towards it, just not very sort of consciously moving towards it.

**Cittapala:** It seemed that, at least from his account, that most of his, I suppose interactions with other people remained on a certain level and that an intimate relationship was something that would represent kind of a deeper or, I suppose a deeper level of friendship, a more open level of friendship.

**S:** I would say the intimate is not necessarily the deeper, I think intimate has got a more specialised meaning, I would say. So that again, back to what I said earlier, intimate and so on means you allow them to see things that you don't allow even most of your friends to see. But why don't you allow people to see those things?

**Subhuti:** You are ashamed of...

**S:** It may be that you are ashamed of them, it very often is that, I think. So if you don't mind someone seeing those things in you, or those parts of you of which you are usually ashamed of, or which you are ashamed of in relation to most people, it means you've got a lot of trust, a lot of confidence, you don't mind exposing yourself, because you don't feel vulnerable to that person, you feel that person wouldn't take advantage of what he saw or what he knew or what he found out about you. So this does suggest a certain depth of friendship, doesn't it, a certain, what shall I say, a certain level of development in the friendship. It suggests that there's quite a lot of sort of sensitivity in the friendship.

**Ratnaprabha:** Do you think that this trust could have a negative side, it could involve a sort of a mutual agreement not to criticise, not to tread on each others' corns?

**S:** Well, this of course does sometimes happen. Perhaps then we should find another term for that. This is part of the reason why I said that intimacy is a part of friendship, perhaps necessarily a part, but intimacy itself isn't, or it can subsist apart from friendship in the true sense. Would that be the case in this sort of instance?

**Prasannasiddhi:** That would perhaps be friendship not between non-individuals, one might say, they are just sort of mutually backing up each others' faults.

**S:** People who have sex together are intimate in some sense, aren't they, but they are not necessarily friends by any means, they are physically intimate, the nature of the sexual situation advises them to be, but it's not necessarily any other kind of intimacy or real friendship.

**Vajrananda:** It seems that people are... they feel a need for intimacy in the sense of being seen by someone.

**Subhuti:** It's a self-disclosure.

**S:** Yes, self-disclosure. Often intimacy is used in a sense or involves physical contact, sexual and non-sexual.

Anyway, perhaps we had better come back to the verse... because it would be good if we could get through the whole poem. We are a bit behind actually. Anyway, Johnson says: 'Directress of the brave and just, O guide me through life's darksome way, And let the tortures of mistrust On selfish bosoms only prey'. So here Johnson clearly sees trust as an essential part of friendship and he associates friendship with unselfishness and mistrust with selfishness, which is quite significant. What does one mean by trust? We have talked about this quite a lot in different contexts. What does one mean by trust?

**Ratnaprabha:** One is confident that the other person is not going to hurt you, going to try to do you any harm.

**S:** Yes, but maybe in a more general sense one is sure, one is confident, in a sense one knows, that the other person is not going to, is not capable in fact, of acting or speaking in a certain way. That is what your trust means. So if you hear, say at second or third hand that that particular person has done this or not done that, or said this or not said that, you refuse to believe it, because you trust that person, you have the confidence, in a sense you know, that he couldn't behave in that particular way, even though perhaps the evidence is against him apparently. So that sort of confidence, that sort of trust can develop only over a very long time, has to be grounded in experience.

**Mangala:** Is there such a thing as absolute trust?

**S:** In any way there cannot be absolute trust because there cannot be absolute experience and there cannot be absolute knowledge. You'd require infinite time on all possible situations...

**Mangala:** There will always be a sort of corner of you which could be doubting, I suppose, as regards to anybody.

**S:** Well, that would be absolute doubt, but there wouldn't be any reason for that.

**Mangala:** Yes.

**S:** For instance if someone came to me and said that, for instance, while Subhuti was down in London he got married. I'd say no, I don't believe it, he'd never do a thing like that. But it's not absolutely impossible. But it's beyond all reasonable doubt, and that is all that is required for that particular purpose. [Pause] There are certain things that you just cannot believe of certain people that you know, with whom you are friends. Even if some apparently trustworthy person told you, you're not going to believe it, you just know that person so well, it just goes against everything that you know of him, it goes against your whole experience of him. And even if you're brought to admit, well, they might have actually done that particular thing, you're convinced at the same time that there must have been extenuating circumstances of which you just don't know, so that that person definitely cannot be blamed.

**Subhadra:** And isn't it implied that you yourself have confidence that you cannot do certain things? Or not?

**S:** Not necessarily. You can sometimes, in certain respects have more confidence in somebody else than you have in yourself. You might be quite confident, well that person will never tell a lie even though you may not be equally confident about yourself. You might think, well if it had been me, well maybe I would have done! But not that person. [Pause] You notice Johnson speaks of the tortures of mistrust. If you don't trust someone, your mistrust will torture you. You just don't know what to think, what to believe, you don't know where you stand. This is the difference in many respects between friendship and love. In love how much mistrust there is, very often! Therefore how much worry, how much anxiety, how much jealousy. There are some men who don't let their wives or their girlfriends go out of their sight. They certainly wouldn't trust them with another man, wouldn't like to hear of them speaking to another man, in a friendly way.

**Ratnaprabha:** This seems to be a very definite hallmark of the difference between love and friendship, doesn't it, that jealousy, presumably, could never arise in a friendship, in a true friendship, whereas it obviously very very often does arise in a love relationship.

**S:** There's not that kind of possessiveness, that kind of exclusiveness. Clearly, if you are to be very close friends with someone, if you are to develop a strong friendship, you need to spend quite a lot of time with that person and you can't spend a lot of time with more than a quite limited number of people, maybe not more than four or five, according to Aristotle anyway. But that is not exclusiveness because you'd be quite happy, yes, to be able to have a deeper or strong friendship with more and more people, but the limitations of human life just don't permit that. The time at one's disposal doesn't permit that. But in the case of love, you only want to be with that person, you want to exclude other people, you don't want to love others or to be friends with others because you are obsessed by that one particular person. You are not concentrating on them or concentrating on your relationship with them in a skilful sort of way. You just can't help yourself, the difference lies there.

**Prasannasiddhi:** So there's unskilful and skilful exclusivity in relationships?

**S:** Yes, or one might say deliberate exclusivity and - what shall I say? - compulsive exclusivity. You can concentrate, you can deliberately concentrate on, say, one or two or three particular relationships in the same way as you might deliberately concentrate, say, on painting to the exclusion of poetry or on poetry to the exclusion of painting, knowing that you can't concentrate on them all. That's impossible by the very nature of the situation. But you'd like to be able to do justice to them all, you wish that you were maybe in some more ideal world where that was possible.

**S:** You'd like to have to be everybody's close friend, or be close friends with everybody. That might be possible in *Sukhavati* but not on this earth. You would need to be able to multiply yourself into a hundred or a thousand bodies, with thousands of arms, what to speak of legs and so on.

So 'Directress of the brave and just, O guide me through life's darksome way, And let the tortures of mistrust On selfish bosoms only prey'. You notice, again, the precision of his language, he uses the word prey; suggests a vulture just tearing away at somebody's vitals. You mistrust because of selfishness, hm?, possessiveness, greed, exclusivity. [long pause]

So Johnson is, in a way, saying: let friendship be my guide, let me be unselfish! Because, without being unselfish, one cannot be a friend. [long pause]

You notice of course, that Johnson regards it as a virtue to be just. Justice or the quality of being just is not especially admired nowadays. We couldn't say, well, he's a very just person, he's a very just man. Why do you think that is? It used to be a highly honoured virtue. It's one of the four moral virtues, isn't it?

**Ratnaprabha:** Is it perhaps because we don't like the idea of somebody having power to exert justice over other people?

**S:** Well no, justice doesn't necessarily involve power over other people, it's more like giving others their due. You remember what the four moral virtues are? What are they? There's the three theological virtues and there's the four moral virtues which were taken over by Christian philosophy from classical antiquity. As far as I remember they are temperance, prudence, I think courage, and justice, hm? But justice essentially means giving to everybody what is due to them, hm? For instance, you give your wife your fidelity, your confidence, you give your friend your friendship and your trust, you give your children your care and your protection, hm? If someone is your creditor you give him what is due to him, namely the money that you owe him. In this way you are a just man. Do you see what I mean? Justice is primarily this, giving to everybody what is due to them from you. So why do we not think in terms of justice so much these days?

**Subhuti:** We think in terms of rights.

**S:** We think in terms of rights, of what is due to me from others, not what is due from me to others.

**Subhuti:** Grabbing your rights.

**S:** Justice, in the more legal sense, justice in the sense that involves the exercise of power, is a special form of justice. It's more like a restoration of rights.

### **End of side one Side two**

For instance someone robs you, well, he had no right to rob you, that is an infringement of justice, so the justice of the state intervenes and compels him perhaps to restore to you what is taken from you, because it is yours, not his, and perhaps it punishes him for that infringement of the law. Though that is justice in the more secondary sense. Justice in that sense, the legal sense, intervenes to make sure that human beings do, in the affairs of social life at least, at least in a legal sense, render unto one another what they should render, that the debtor pays his debts, for instance, that no one appropriates the life of another person, or his goods or his wife.

**Subhuti:** That secondary sense of justice has taken over, instead of thinking in terms of what justice is in itself, you think in terms of what the law requires of you and of what you can get away with.

**S:** Right.

**Subhadra:** I usually think of justice or someone who is just as being someone who controls the wrongdoer, someone who is pretty bad, you should think: they'll get it from that person. Then on the other hand you just realise that you have to give what is due to people, you have to give positive things...

**S:** You may remember that Plato's Republic starts with a discussion of justice. I don't remember the Greek word for justice.

**Subhuti:** (unclear comment) [Pause]

**S:** We still recognise bravery as a virtue but hardly justice. In fact, some people would seem almost to go to the extreme that there should not be any justice, you should just be kind to everybody, which means giving them what they want or what they would like to receive, that therefore you shouldn't punish anybody. Do you see what I mean, we seem almost to have gone to that extreme, perhaps because in the past justice was a pseudo-justice, and over-rigorous, over-severe. [Pause]

**Ratnaprabha:** So you say that justice is not giving people what they want, this is what you've described as what has sort of replaced it?

**S:** Yes, for instance, the criminal would not want to be punished. He'd want to be forgiven. So perhaps in a sense he should be forgiven but again in another sense perhaps he shouldn't.

**Ratnaprabha:** I was just wondering whether justice therefore implies being in a position to actually judge what people really need or what society really needs. Does it require that sort of maturity to be able to be a just person?

**S:** To be a just person you must be able to understand what is due from you to others. Justice in the legal sense represents the consensus among the members of a particular group with regard to what is due from one member of the group to another. [long pause]

It does occur to me, by the way, that we are not going to finish this evening. What do you want to do?

**Ratnaprabha:** Could we carry on after supper?

**S:** We could carry on after supper.

**Subhadra:** I'd like to, yes.

**S:** Yes.

**Subhuti:** The only matters we have to discuss really should involve more Order Members so we better leave that Order Meeting for a week.

**S:** All right, let's just carry on till suppertime without hurrying. Alright then, anything further about that particular verse?

**Subhadra:** Just that justice nowadays is associated with punishing offenders rather than giving people what they should have.

**S:** Perhaps they should have punishment, one needs to consider that possibility. I mean, this is a very unfashionable concept, that of punishment.

**Subhadra:** I was including...

**S:** What does one mean by punishment, anyway?

**Subhadra:** I would include punishment as what people need as well. That's why Plato makes a big thing of it how punishment is the kindest thing you can give to someone who has done something wrong, who can't take any other form of correction.

**S:** Because punishment does make people realise that actions do have consequences. If you don't punish people, if you don't punish children, for instance, when they do wrong, it is as though you're saying in effect that actions do not have consequences. You can do something and get away with it, that means actions don't have consequences. Do you see what I mean?

**Mangala:** Well, presumably, maybe it's not possible with children, but, I mean, at least with adults you could perhaps at least argue with them that... maybe you can't show them directly how their actions have consequences, but at least you show them theoretically the harm it would lead to.

**S:** This is true if the person is quite open-minded and rational but supposing they are confirmed in their unskilful behaviour. You just sort of give them as it were a talking to, you reason with them, oh yes, they'll listen to you but after they'll go away and just laugh at you, in some cases, they just take you for a fool, they just go on as before. I think one has to take account of the fact that there are in society some people of this kind.

**Subhadra:** It's not enough to leave it up to the working of karma, is it?

**S:** Well, no, because that may ripen in some other world, whereas you are concerned with the disturbing effects of the behaviour of those people on the society in which you are actually living.

**Subhadra:** And it's better for them, as well, if you correct them now.

**S:** It possibly is, yes.

**Ratnaprabha:** You were saying that justice is to do with giving people their due, what you are due to give them.

**S:** Yes.

**Ratnaprabha:** So who is it who is due to give punishment, as it were, I mean, how can you tell who are the people in society to whom it is due to give this punishment?

**S:** There is no one I would say, whose natural duty it is to confer punishment. It's society itself which punishes and society appoints certain people or elects certain people to carry out those punishments, to perform that particular function.

**Ratnaprabha:** So justice involves sort of society as a whole as well as relationships between individuals.

**S:** Oh yes! Because it is society as a whole, which determines... as I said there is a consensus in a particular society, in a particular group as to what is due from one person to another.

**Mangala:** Presumably when you talk about punishment, I presume you wouldn't include things like flogging in that or...?

**S:** Flogging is a punishment! Whether all punishments are skilful, that is another matter. One could introduce a refinement and say that there are punishments that are vindictive punishments. But again, I think one has to tread very carefully on psychological grounds, you have also to consider the effect upon society as a whole, if it is seen in too many cases that some highly unskilful actions, highly damaging to society and apparently quite wilfully performed, are not followed by any unpleasant consequences at all for the perpetrator of those actions. That, if you are not careful, can convey to society as a whole that actions don't have consequences, that you can get away with it.

**Mangala:** Presumably it would be possible to punish all sorts of offences in relatively, say, humane ways, or, I mean, inverted commas, I mean...

**S:** But it is of the nature of a punishment, if it is to be a punishment at all that in some sense, in some degree, it must hurt. Yes?

**Mangala:** That's what I was thinking, it might be questioned whether to lock somebody up in a cell for six months is any worse than giving him a few lashes.

**S:** Because even if you fine him he will be hurt because you hurt someone in their pocket, then.

**Prasannasiddhi:** You hurt someone in their pocket if you...?

**S:** If you fine them.

**Prasannasiddhi:** If you fine them, ah.

**S:** Yes, that means... Because some people might say that if you fine someone you don't hurt them, but actually you do hurt them because the pocket is a sensitive place, a sensitive point.

**Cittapala:** How does this relate to bringing up children, when you've got...?

**S:** Anybody who has had anything at all to do with children knows that children can be very unreasonable and the only way in which you can control them is by your superior force. In other words, you can only control them by violence, violence in the sense of exercise of force. If there are some things they are determined to do and you are determined that they should not do those things, possibly because they are bad for the child himself, possibly because they are bad for everybody else in the family.

**Cittapala:** Doesn't that need very careful handling? Couldn't one sort of inculcate the view that... the power mode sort of structure of going around...?

**S:** There are some things that can be dealt with only by the power mode. I think one has to accept that power mode within the group, to the extent that one lives within the group, cannot be entirely abdicated, certainly not by society as a whole, if there is to be any society at all. It can be abdicated by the individual who is not concerned with his own survival, his own bodily survival, he can abdicate the power mode, but only if he is prepared to surrender his own bodily survival, if need be, but the group cannot totally surrender the exercise of the power mode without disintegrating as a group, without ceasing to exist as a group. In as much as there are some members of the group who will exercise the power mode, and if they are not to bring everybody else under their control, well, society as a whole, assuming that other members of the group are in a majority, must exercise power.

**Cittapala:** That would suggest, in terms of education, that there ought to be a sort of systematic and careful use of the power mode in some ways so that people come to understand its limitations but also its effectiveness.

**S:** Yes. I think, therefore, that from this point of view, the abolition of corporal punishment in schools is extremely unwise, because it sort of tells the students, tells the children, that certain, what shall I say, certain sanctions no longer obtain. All you can get is a talking-to. All you can get is lines. Supposing you won't listen, supposing you are rude, supposing you just walk away, what happens then? Suppose you won't listen? Suppose you won't write out those lines a hundred times, all right, what then? Supposing your parents back you up, what then? Where does that leave the school? Can there be a school on that sort of basis?

**Subhuti:** There can only be expulsion.

**S:** There can only be expulsion, all right, what happens then, if you are sent, presumably, to another school? Or everybody goes on strike in support your reinstatement. Yes?

**Mangala:** I suppose, like, where you've got a group as you have in our society that's inevitable... you know...

**S:** I think the only way around this, possibly, is when you are dealing with people, that is children, in very small numbers from a very early age and dealing with them in such a positive way, assuming that they are capable of a positive response, which is a very big assumption, that actual physical discipline will never be needed. But you may have the odd recalcitrant child who however positively, however lovingly brought up, under however favourable circumstances will have a disruptive streak and a violent streak, which you either have to allow to run riot or you have to control and that can only be by a counter force. So I think society as such cannot abdicate the employment of force.

**Mangala:** Presumably again there is, like, there's force which could just block what is, I suppose, essentially energy and there's force which could try to channel that...

**S:** At least it must block it, if it can channel it so much the better, but it cannot not block it because it is unable to channel it, otherwise society will suffer.

**Mangala:** But you don't... Would you say that perhaps more emphasis should be put on re-channelling that...

**S:** If it is at all possible...

**Mangala:** ..rather than blocking?

**S:** ...certainly that is preferable but not to such an extent that the necessity for sometimes blocking, so to speak, is lost sight of.

**Mangala:** Yes.

**S:** Therefore I don't think a society can ever dispense with the use of force, can ever dispense with their police, even though certain individuals may, you know abdicate the exercise of the power mode completely, or even a group within the group, say the Spiritual Community, but that Spiritual Community will still be enjoying the protection of those others who have not abdicated the exercise of the power mode.

**Prasannasiddhi:** Of course, seen on these different levels of society that these things could be more... like the purely general level in society is quite low, you might have a lot more crime and a lot more punishment and it may even become possible that the police force actually becomes unskilful and people who...

**S:** Well, worse than that maybe, as it does happen in some countries, is that the police force itself becomes, what shall I say, in practice almost indistinguishable from the criminal element. The bent copper. So this means that well actually a shift of power takes place within a society, that what is sort of theoretically the minority has actually become the majority, at least in terms of exercise of power, that actually society is run by criminals, many of whom pay lip-service to the law but no more than that.

**Cittapala:** Are there any other sort of structures of education which you would equate alongside with capital punishment as in effect lessening the use of power and the power mode? Do you see what I mean?

**S:** Well, the exercise of the power mode consists in forcibly restraining somebody from doing what he or she wishes to do. This is the essence of it. And some societies, if they find that that particular individual, that particular person, cannot be restrained at all, hm?, and what that person has done hitherto is so seriously against the interests of society that at all costs he must be prevented from doing it again, then of course the death penalty comes into consideration. Some societies believe that to be justified, the exaction of that penalty to be justified.

**Ratnaprabha:** Have there ever been any Buddhist... so-called Buddhist societies where the death penalty has been exercised?

**S:** Oh, yes, I can't think of any Buddhist societies or I should say Buddhist state where the death has not been exercised. But it's exercised by the king, it's not exercised by the Sangha. The Sangha will have nothing to do with the punishment. Strictly speaking, a Bhikkhu cannot bear witness against someone in a court of law, in case that person may be punished, because the Bhikkhu is supposed to have completely abdicated the use of the power mode, but that does not apply to society at large, it does not apply to the so-called lay Buddhists, including the king.

**Ratnaprabha:** How do they reconcile the carrying out of a death sentence or a flogging with observing the precepts?

**S:** Well, they would say, putting it very simply in their terms: "Well, we are not monks, the full observance of the precepts is not expected of us". That is not really the last word that can be said on the subject but this is what they would say, that we are not monks.

**Cittapala:** Where would that leave us in terms of... er... doing jury service?

**S:** Well there is another instance, the exercise of your vote, because one has to consider whether one abdicates exercise of the power mode for good or for ill, skilful or unskilful, altogether or not. I mean, you might do jury service and you might use your best efforts to get somebody acquitted, even someone who was guilty, and had been proved to be guilty, because you felt that even the guilty should not be punished. All right, you may release someone into society and who commits the same crime all over again but you then bear some measure of that moral responsibility.

**Cittapala:** So, I'm sorry, I didn't quite see where the...?

**S:** Well, it leaves you having to decide whether you are going to exercise that quantum of power which actually you possess by virtue of being a citizen of a state - or not. In fact, you could even argue you don't even possess that freedom, because your non-exercise of it is in fact an exercise of it. That you are not given any choice.

**A voice:** Your non-exercise of it...?

**S:** Yes, is an exercise of it.

**A voice:** How?

**S:** Well, supposing there is an election and there is a tie. Well, all right, supposing someone, for instance loses just by one vote, if they had got one vote more they would have won. But you haven't exercised your vote so your non-exercise of your vote is actually an exercise of your vote. But in other words, the fact that you don't do something affects the situation. So you cannot not act, really.

**Ratnaprabha:** Does this mean that in a democratic society it's actually impossible to abdicate from the power mode?

**S:** It's impossible in any society, really. Or rather, it's only possible to abdicate the power mode effectively in a society where all have abdicated the power mode. This is why I say among Order members, mutually, there should be, there can be, no exercise of the power mode, because all equally have abdicated the use of that power mode by virtue of the fact that they are individuals and not just group members.

**Cittapala:** But one can only exercise that within the context of operating with other members of the Sangha?

**S:** Yes, yes, but once you step outside, well, you can, so to speak abdicate your use of the power mode, which means that you will not directly be exercising it, you will be nonetheless indirectly exercising it by virtue of your abstention from exercising it, in as much as by not exercising it you are in fact having a certain effect, in a certain way, on society. Having an effect which can be construed in terms of power. I mean, like all the good people in Germany who allowed, let us say, Hitler to seize power. The majority of them were very happy he should do so, but there was quite a sizeable minority that wasn't happy but that didn't do anything.

**Cittapala:** I mean, all the monks who let themselves get killed at Nalanda, you know, the...

**S:** Yes, they were not exercising the power mode.

**Subhuti:** The Cathars.

**S:** The Cathars, they were not exercising the power mode.

**Cittapala:** But by not protecting themselves they were in a way, weren't they, it did actually have an effect upon the society in which they...

**S:** Yes, it did in as much as the Cathars as a community, as a religion, ceased to exist, but they would have argued, perhaps, that if they had defended it and exercised the power mode, committed deeds of violence, and survived, would Catharism have survived? Those are the sort of dilemmas by which one is confronted. I mean, they left a very shining example, as it happens, a very inspiring example. One has to consider that, too. I'm not saying that I necessarily agree with them. It can be looked at from that point of view.

**Cittapala:** It doesn't seem that actually their decision to allow themselves to be sort of annihilated actually was effectively that much more pure than if they had decided to defend themselves.

**S:** One can also say look at things in the context of rebirth. If you do abstain from the exercise of the power mode to that extent, what effect does that have on you as a, so to speak, reincarnating entity? No doubt it has a very powerful effect, indeed, if you refused to exercise power under those circumstances. But what I'm really sort of trying to point out here is that to be non-violent is not just an easy and a simple matter and to be against corporal punishment in schools. In some cases at least, it is just the result of muddled thinking. I'm not saying that I'm necessarily in favour of corporal punishment in schools, but I'm certainly not in favour of unintelligent, blind opposition to corporal punishment in schools.

**Ratnaprabha:** Do you think that, really, it's unwise to make generalisations in any case, and that one should look at each case on its merits, a particular school might require it and another school might not?

**S:** Well, one has to generalise even so, because there would need to be laws, even laws saying that you mustn't generalise, even to say that you mustn't generalise is a generalisation! [laughter] Anyway perhaps we had better leave it there, have supper, and come back afterwards.

**Subhuti:** There's a little bit more on this verse, perhaps we can do it afterwards.

**S:** Pardon?

**Subhuti:** I was just thinking, you stressed how precise Johnson is, he's chosen those two qualities...

**S:** Brave and Just.

**Subhuti:** Brave and just, why, why those two?

**S:** Well, they are, if you want to be very technical, they are two out of the moral virtues. I mean, as I mentioned, in the first verse he speaks of the noble mind and in this verse he speaks of someone being brave and just.

**Cittapala:** Prudence and temperance wouldn't actually fit in there very well.

**S:** No, no, you don't need to be prudent with your friends!

**Cittapala:** Or even perhaps temperate?

**S:** Well, temperate in what? Certainly not temperate in your friendship! But the bravery and the justice are not with regard to the friendship itself. It's presumably with regard to your dealings with the outside world. Maybe brave and just are qualities which suggest the moral man, the ethical man, hm? It is only the ethical man who is susceptible to the guidance of friendship. Only the good man can be a friend. But we'll come to that in a future verse. It refers to that quite explicitly in the next verse, perhaps we had better leave it till then.

[break]

**S:** Anyway, have we finished dealing with the stanza four? All right, let's pass on to stanza five. Someone like to read it?

*Thy gentle flows of guiltless joys  
On fools and villains ne'er descend;  
In vain for thee the monarch sighs  
And hugs a flatterer for a friend.*

**S:** Hm. So 'Thy gentle flows of guiltless joys On fools and villains ne'er descend.' Part of this verse goes back very, very far afield, to quite ancient, in fact classical (unclear) of Aristotle, in his 'Ethics' Aristotle discusses the question of whether there can be friendship between the vicious, that is to say the unvirtuous and he concludes that there cannot be. Community in crime does not amount to friendship. Friendship is possible only between those

who are virtuous. Johnson must have been well aware of that tradition and so he therefore says 'Thy gentle flows of guiltless joys on fools and villains' hm?, 'ne'er descend,' hm? In other words, the foolish and those who are villains never enjoy friendship. We'll go in a minute into the language which he uses to describe those joys. But in a way Johnson goes further than Aristotle, at least, because he says that not only are villains incapable of friendship, not only are villains incapable of enjoying the benefits of friendship but fools likewise are incapable of enjoying them. So what do you think he means by fool in this connection? [Pause] A fool cannot be a friend. Well, the Buddha says there's no companionship with fools, doesn't he, in the *Dhammapada*, but here fool means what I've translated as the spiritually immature person, *bala*, hm? But what does fool mean here?

**Mangala:** Perhaps some sort of animal-like... something quite low... (unclear suggestions)

**S:** Lacking in understanding, lacking in responsibility. Lacking in reliability. [Pause]

**Prasannasiddhi:** (unclear sentence)

**S:** Well, one can look in Johnson's Dictionary and see. Go, run into Kovida's room and bring Johnson's Dictionary, the appropriate volume, we'll see exactly what Johnson himself says on the subject.

**Ratnaprabha:** Shame the Buddha didn't write a dictionary!

**Mangala:** Presumably also a fool wouldn't be able to comprehend something like the spiritual development...

**S:** A fool is also someone who is incapable of discrimination, is unable to distinguish, perhaps, between right and wrong, friendship and lack of friendship, the dull-witted or the dim-witted or even half-witted.

**Vajrananda:** Who is the monarch?

**S:** Monarch means any king, not any particular monarch. [Pause] Fool - this is what Johnson says - 'One to whom nature has denied reason, (sounds: ah! oh!) natural, idiot.' And a quotation from King Lear, Johnson, one of the great features of his dictionary, of the original features, that is he illustrates the usage of each word by quotations from English literature in chronological order. So he quotes from Shakespeare: 'Do'st thou call me fool, boy?' - King Lear. Then again Locke, the philosopher Locke: 'It may be asked whether the eldest son, being a fool, shall inherit paternal power before the younger, a wise man.' Then Pope: 'He thanks his stars he was not born a fool.' And then from the Bible: 'The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.' [laughter] ...and then 2. 'A term of indignity and reproach', 3. 'One who counterfeits folly; a buffoon; a jester'. Used adjectivally, 'play the fool, fool's errand, make a fool of...' and then the verb etc., etc., 'One to whom nature has denied reason, natural, idiot.' [Pause]

I was thinking, while we've got this volume, we might as well see how he defines friendship in prose. [Pause]

**S:** His etymologies are usually weak but he does correctly derive the term 'friend' from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'love'. He defines a friend as 'one joined to another in mutual benevolence and intimacy, as opposed to foe or enemy', and friendship: '1. State of minds united by mutual benevolence, amity 2. Highest degree of intimacy 3. Favour, personal kindness 4. Assistance, help 5. Conformity, affinity, correspondence, aptness to unite.' All these definitions are illustrated by quotations.

**Ratnaprabha:** Did you say 'the highest degree of intimacy'?

**S:** Yes.

**Mangala:** What was that for, Bhante?

**S:** This is 'friendship', definition 2, of the different senses in which the term is used. First of all it's 'the state of minds united by mutual benevolence'. It seems like mutual *Mitrata* doesn't it? And then secondly, the 'highest degree of intimacy', and third, it means 'favour, personal kindness', and four, it means 'assistance, help', and five, it means 'conformity, affinity, correspondence, aptness to unite'.

**Prasannasiddhi:** One of these definitions is actually the highest degree of intimacy... (1-2 words unclear)

**S:** Yes, well, that's one of the senses of the term, yes. [Pause] So one who is deficient, naturally deficient in reason, in understanding - Johnson isn't, of course, using the word reason in the similar sense of logic, cannot be a friend, cannot be friends with such a person. But what about this question of 'Gentle flows of guiltless joys descending'? He's spoken of friendship as the peculiar boon of heaven, he's spoken of the lambent glories of friendship, and he's spoken of friendship guiding through life's darksome way. Now he speaks, in similar vein, of the gentle flows of the guiltless joys of friendship descending. Hm? He imagines friendship as something showering down, or at least he imagines the sort of... what shall I say...the guiltless joys of friendship descending, as it were, in gentle showers. Hm? It suggests something sort of raining down. First of all the guiltless joys of friendship, or the flows of the guiltless joys of friendship, are gentle, not forceful, it doesn't mean that they are weak but they are not violent, not forceful, Hm? They are gentle, and he speaks of them as flows, there's something as it were spontaneous, something constantly recurring, something alive. And of course he speaks of joys, he speaks of the joys of friendship, the gentle flows of the joys of friendship. The gentle flows rather of the guiltless joys of friendship, never descend on fools and villains. He says guiltless joys, the joys of friendship are free from guilt. I think, for Johnson this is a quite important point, because, as an Orthodox Christian, one might say, he had a very strong sense of guilt, he was tormented, even tortured, one might say, throughout his life, practically, by a very, very strong sense of guilt. I won't go into the reasons for that. They are, I think more or less known. But he had a very strong sense of guilt, and he was very afraid that he would in the end go to hell, even though he was by ordinary standards a very good, even very virtuous man, he had this terrible sense of guilt, this terrible fear of punishment after death.

**Subhadra:** Was it irrational guilt?

**S:** It was irrational guilt, yes, he hadn't actually done anything which we would consider, would make him guilty to that extent. So he would naturally attach great importance, great significance, we might say, to any joy which was free from guilt, any pleasure, one might say, that was free from guilt. The adjective guiltless would carry a great weight for him, reminds him of being free from guilt. So he felt very strongly that friendship was of such a nature that you could enjoy the pleasures of friendship without any sense of guilt, that friendship was a completely pure thing, a spiritual thing, a heavenly thing, this is what he is saying. 'Thy gentle flows of guiltless joys on fools and villains ne'er descend'. He is contrasting the gentle flows of the guiltless joys of friendship with the tortures of mistrust of love. Yes?

**Subhuti:** Do you think that it is also perhaps a reflection of his Christian belief in that you had to make it quite clear that the joys were guiltless? Because joys were often seen as to be...

**S:** Yes. A joy could be polluted, some people can take pleasure in unskilful things. Buddhists certainly recognise that, you can take pleasure in inflicting pain and suffering on other living beings. So perhaps he does need, even objectively, to make it clear that the joys of friendship are guiltless joys. This also reinforces the point that there cannot be, really, friendship between vicious people because the pleasure that they would derive from their friendship, engaging apparently in unskilful activities together, cannot be a guiltless pleasure.

**Ratnaprabha:** Why should fools, who he defines as people lacking in understanding, why should they not be able to experience the joys of friendship?

**S:** Presumably because they can't experience friendship itself.

**Subhuti:** Lack of individuality.

**S:** Lack of... I suppose the absence of reason is part of the lack of individuality itself.

**Ratnaprabha:** Does this mean that that sort of individuality requires a certain level of actual intelligence, or is he not really talking about understanding in that sort of way?

**S:** It would seem so, it would seem so, yes, because individuality surely requires a certain level of development of the whole being. You can't be an individual without intelligence, nor can you be an individual without positive emotion, or sense of responsibility, or energy?

### **End of Tape Two    Tape Three**

**Ratnaprabha:** I'm just thinking, is it one of the eighty four Siddhas who was said to be very lacking in intelligence, in a way, in that he was said to be unable to learn the stanzas given to him as a meditation exercise?

**S:** But does that show a lack of intelligence?

**Ratnaprabha:** I don't know.

**S:** Well it is a difference between having a weak memory and having a weak understanding? Though clearly, if your memory is non-existent, well, you couldn't understand anything because you couldn't even follow an argument from beginning to end. So some measure of memory is necessary to understanding, but I mean, what measure? Does one need the memory of a McCaulay or a Johnson? Where does one draw the line? But certainly there is a line that can be drawn somewhere. But nonetheless memory is distinct from intelligence. There are people who have greater powers of recollection than they have intelligence and vice versa of course.

**Ratnaprabha:** So in what degree is intelligence necessary for one to develop individuality?

**S:** Well, this involves the question of what is intelligence?

[Pause] I think we have discussed that several times, in different study groups. We did discuss it on at least one of the Tuscany's.

**Cittapala:** Oh, yes, but I think you said on that occasion that...

**S:** We referred to a previous study group!

**Cittapala:** Yes. (laughter)

**S:** I've forgotten which one.

**Cittapala:** It was the *Satipatthana Sutta*, I think we brought it out in the context of memory and I think that was...

**S:** Yes, I think we did discuss it on the first Tuscany, as far as I know. I think I quoted then the definition that I often do give that intelligence is the creative use of concepts. We certainly discussed the implications of that definition on more than on one occasion. [Pause] For instance, Mongols don't seem to have intelligence, Mongol children don't seem to have intelligence though they have a high degree of emotional positivity, in fact an unusually high degree I believe. And the opposite is really the case of the person with a very high degree of intelligence, at least, perhaps, a high IQ, but is very lacking in positive emotion, it would seem that in the case of neither kind of person can you be friends with them or can they be friends with you. The Mongol child tends to attach himself or herself to you, I've been told, much as a dog would.

**Prasannasiddhi:** Mongol...?

**S:** Mongol child.

**Prasannasiddhi:** Mong..?

**S:** Not Mongolian but Mongol, it's a particular kind of mental deficiency, congenital mental deficiency. I think they can't even learn to talk. But they are always happy and cheerful and very friendly, so there seems to be, as I said, a high degree of emotional positivity. But, well, one could say that if intelligence is not developed, if there isn't that possibility of the creative use of concepts, then communication is very limited. And if communication is limited, well, friendships presumably can't develop. One could at least say that.

**Subhuti:** Isn't intelligence very intimately connected with individuality, in so far as it's part of your faculty of self-reflection?

**S:** Yes it is, it must be connected in that way to have any connection with individuality at all.

**Subhuti:** If you have no intelligence, you can't assert yourself and therefore you can't be a friend in a sense because you can't differentiate yourself from anything else. You couldn't identify somebody as being separate from you, for you to want to come to a relationship with them.

**S:** That would be true, but is that a lack of intelligence or is it not sufficient to say that that reflexive consciousness has not developed? Perhaps it does amount to the same thing, because would it be possible to have someone in whom reflexive consciousness had fully developed but who was lacking in intelligence? Probably it's a question of degree, but the two would seem to go together, the intensity of reflexive consciousness and the intensity of intelligence, or the degree of reflexive consciousness and the degree of intelligence.

**Vajrananda:** The use of concepts, not just the creative use but just the use of concepts...?

**S:** No, I think one needs to say creative use, because what does one mean by creative use? Again, I have gone into this, that one is not bound by the concepts that one uses, one uses them freely. Well, one can only say one uses them creatively or one uses them intelligently. Hm? You all know people that have got very literalistic minds. They don't use the concepts that they do use creatively, they are limited by them instead of being freed by them. In the course of almost any study group you can get questions which are asked on very literalistic assumptions. A computer can make use of concepts but it cannot make use of them creatively. A computer can feed back to you only what you've originally fed into the computer. So a computer makes use of concepts but it can't make a creative use of them.

**Cittapala:** I was just thinking, they are probably working on it now.

**S:** Well, if they succeed, well, there would be, in some ways at least, no difference between a computer and a human being, but on the other hand you could argue that even if they did produce a computer that could use concepts creatively, the capacity to use those concepts creatively would have been fed in to it. And the creativity, presumably, would be limited by the extent to which creativity had been fed in to it, in which case it wouldn't be truly creative, it would be formally creative.

**Vajrananda:** It would require emotions, wouldn't it?

**S:** Yes, it would require emotions.

**Mangala:** ...to have a computer which eats salad!?

**Cittapala:** I suppose presumably a computer can only produce creative ideas on a random basis, whereas a human being actually creates with an intention.

**S:** Yes, purposefulness goes with creativity, yes, the computer could certainly come up with, not creative concepts, but new things on a random basis, say, new combinations of letters. They might just by chance, the millionth odd random collage might actually be a new word that could be used. It'll only be on that sort of basis. But it will only be a word, it would not be a word actually used to communicate something. So there will be a very definite limit to so-called creativity. One could say that random creativity is not creativity at all. One could even say creativity is essentially purposive and expressive and communicative.

**Ratnaprabha:** Apparently some computer scientists are isolating a thing called a Turing Machine, which was first suggested by Chap called Adam Turing in the early fifties. And I think this would... The idea is that computers are getting so complex that they are actually beyond the understanding of their own programs, and they've got learning programs and things like this and tend to do a lot of things for themselves and the belief, I think it seems to be only a sort of faith rather than something with very much justification, the belief is that eventually computers will sort of make a quantum leap into a new level into which one could call them actually conscious machines of some sort.

**Subhadra:** Hmmm...

**S:** Again it depends on the definition of consciousness. While there can be no doubt a behaviouristic definition, which is in a sense a no-definition, because behaviourism doesn't recognise the existence of consciousness as such. Anyway, that carries us too far afield, doesn't it. Anyway, the main point here is clear. That 'Thy gentle flows of guiltless joys on fools and villains ne'er descend'. Fools - those who are deficient in reason and villains - those who are deficient in virtue - are unable to enjoy the blessings of friendship, because they are unable to experience friendship itself, they are unable to be friends and therefore unable to have friends.

**Subhuti:** I can't help thinking about visualisation, sounds like nectar, you know...

**S:** Yes! 'In vain for thee the monarch sighs and hugs a flatterer for a friend.' This introduces a third category, not just fools, not just villains - the monarch, a king, a ruler, or clearly it's the person who exercises power and, one might say, nothing but power. Hm? And hugs a flatterer for a friend. I mean the monarch, the ruler, is in the position where, since he exercises power, he is feared, and since he is feared, well, he is feared to such an extent that it's not possible for anybody to be his friend. In other words, to the extent that there is fear, to that extent friendship is not possible. So people may be around who flatter him, he may even take those flatterers for friends, but they are not really friends, they are just flatterers. So 'in vain for thee the monarch sighs'. Even if the monarch would like to have a friend, he cannot have a friend by virtue of his very position. The person whom he tries to regard as a friend, whom he treats as a friend, whom he hugs, so to speak, is in fact not a friend at all, but just a flatterer, someone who is just telling him fleeting things. Johnson is also saying perhaps, well, look how precious friendship is, look how valuable it is, a king even cannot have it, cannot get it just by wishing for it, just by wanting.

**Voices:** Yes, yes.

**Prasannasiddhi:** The king is like the, sort of pinnacle a certain level, of a certain existence.

**S:** Of earthly power.

**Prasannasiddhi:** Socially, he'd be on one level highly regarded as... (1-2 words unclear) this, sort of, suggests on another level, yet...(1-2 words)

**Subhuti:**... Also, a suggestion of need of friendship, isn't there? The monarch wants, he sighs...

**S:** Yes, he needs a friend, yes, sighs, but by virtue of his position he is incapable of finding a friend because people will be attracted to him not for his personal qualities but on account of his power. They'll all flatter him in order to please him, so that he will give them or do for them whatever they want. In other words, to the extent that you wield power you have to be very cautious about the people approaching you because they won't be approaching you from motives of friendship or personal liking.

**Vajrananda:** It's taken down to a contemporary equation: you can't appropriate the love mode by the power mode.

**S:** No, well, the king here is not perhaps trying to do that but people see him in terms of the power mode, they see him as exercising power, they see him as the king, they see him as able to grant favours. They want something from him, so they are not likely to approach him in a spirit of friendship but only a spirit of selfishness. They flatter him for their own purposes, their own ends. So the more power you have, the more worldly power, the more likely you are to be surrounded by flatterers rather than friends. And also, as I mentioned, there is this whole question of fear, if you are in possession of power, you'll also be feared and it's hardly possible to feel genuine friendship for someone of whom you are afraid.

**Mangala:** Perhaps it's more in a monarch who hugs flatterers for friends...

**S:** Monarch here is a symbol for anyone who possesses power, and influence, of any kind.

**Mangala:** I just wonder to what extent that is a common factor of all so-called mundane friendships, for want of a better expression?

**S:** Well Aristotle discusses this as he discusses so many things, that friendship is not based upon the mutual fulfilment of needs. Someone is not your friend just because he approaches you to fulfill his needs. In modern language, one might say that friendship is growth-based and not need-based. In other words it's not a sign of friendship to approach someone for the sake of what you can get out of them, which is the way in which most people would approach a monarch.

**Mangala:** (unclear few words) ... but in a way, isn't that what you're doing when you try to develop a friendship with someone, in a way, you're trying to get something out of them, perhaps, or is that wrong?

**S:** Well, you may think of it in those terms to begin with, but as the actual friendship develops, you don't any longer think or experience it even, in that sort of way. It is possible to speak of your getting something from

the friendship but at the same time you're not involved in the friendship for the sake of what you can get out of it. We can only sort of say, well, you're involved in the friendship for its own sake. In a sense you're not even involved in it for the sake of personal development, yes? ,not in a cold-blooded sort of way. You don't distinguish, you can't distinguish between the friendship itself and the personal development. The friendship is the personal development, the personal development is the friendship. You can't separate the one from the other and regard the one as existing for the sake of the other. You don't meditate in order to evolve, you don't sort of cold-bloodedly enter upon meditation so that you can evolve, so that you can develop. They are in a sense one and the same thing, when you're meditating you're developing, when you're developing you're meditating.

**Subhuti:** I can feel there is a danger in the language... I think we've discussed this before...

**S:** Yes, yes.

**Subhuti:** ...but if you think of yourself as meditating for self-development, in a way you can't....

**S:** Can't enjoy it!

**Subhuti:** ..... really meditate. If you think of yourself developing friendships for the sake of self-development, you can't actually...

**S:** It really sounds quite dreadful, doesn't it? It means you don't ever give yourself to anything, everything is for the sake of you.

**Prasannasiddhi:** It does seem also that where it would be a possibility to have the person who is out to make friends in a kind of cold-blooded the sort of... I think there is a book "How to..."

**S:** "...Win Friends and Influence People". It's a dreadful book. Though it's true up to a point but a point one should stop by any means. "How to Win Friends and Influence People", influence them in the way that you want, for your sake, for your advantage.

**Mangala:** In a sense you could say that the means is the end.

**S:** In a sense yes, one could say that, indeed.

**Subhuti:** If you are too conscious of it as a means... (unclear few words)

**S:** Yes. Anyway, let's go on. Who would like to read the next one.

*When Virtues kindred Virtues meet,  
And sister souls together join,  
Thy pleasures, permanent as great,  
Are all transporting, all divine.*

**S:** Just a couple of words here, one about syntax and one about pronunciation. Pronunciations have changed since Johnson's time. Great was rhymed with meet, Greet, not by all, there are two different schools of pronunciation, one for instance, pronounced e.a. as e and the other as a, for instances sea, s.e.a. which we know was always pronounced as 'see', was pronounced by one school of pronunciation as 'say', we can tell it from the way in which certain poets consistently rhymed these words. Do you see what I mean ? So Johnson is definitely rhyiming great with meet, so it should be pronounced as 'greet'.

In the same way 'join' was then pronounced as 'Jain', o-i was always pronounced as an 'i'. That's why a lot of rhymes nowadays, if we read according to modern pronunciations don't really rhyme. So join rhymes with divine: 'Jain' and 'divine'. Also, in Shakespeare's time 'love' was pronounced 'loov', as it is in the ( 2 words unclear ), which is why you get rhymes, you know, like 'remove' and 'loov', not remove and love, as we would say now, so the pronunciation of certain words has changed quite considerably. Then the syntax: 'When Virtues kindred Virtues meet'; this means: when virtues meet kindred virtues. Hm? Yes? Not when the kindred of virtues meet virtues. 'When Virtues, kindred virtues meet'!! In other words, when virtues meet kindred virtues, when virtues meet virtues which are similar to themselves, which are related as though by blood. In other words, when virtuous people meet virtuous people. Hm? 'And sister souls together join', and when souls that are like sisters. You notice the feminine gender here, eh? hm? So he's presumably talking mainly about masculine friendships. 'Thy pleasures, permanent as great, are all transporting, all divine'. In the previous verse he has referred to friendship's gentle flows of guiltless joys, now he enlarges upon that, he says when virtuous people, who are sort of natural kin, meet, and when in fact sister souls join together, then the pleasures of virtue are as permanent as they are great and they are all-transporting, they are enrapturing, and all-divine. So this is very powerful language, indeed. Do you get the meaning?

**Voices:** Mmmm!

**Voice:** 'Permanent as great'...

**S:** 'Permanent as great'... Thy pleasures, which are as permanent as they are great. The pleasures of friendship are permanent, there's no reaction from them, they never stale, you never grow weary of them. They are as permanent as they are great, Thy pleasures which are as permanent as they are great, that is the meaning.

**Subhuti:** Yes They are permanent in the sense that you don't tire of them, not that they're... well, yes, ( 2-3 words unclear)...

**S:** The pleasures of friendship are permanent pleasures. Real friendship lasts, and the pleasures of real friendship therefore also last. They are lasting pleasures, not like certain other pleasures, not like, for instance, pleasures of the bottle, they certainly don't last when you get a headache, hangover, the following morning. Friendship isn't like that, the pleasures of friendship aren't like that. I mean the pleasures of friendship leave no bitter taste in your mouth afterwards as the pleasures of love very often do.

**Prasannasiddhi:** There could be pleasures that you grow sick of after a while and you're no longer interested in them.

**S:** Oh yes, but you don't tire of friendship.

**Subhadra:** If something's really wholesome, you don't get tired of it.

**S:** Yes. And then it says that the pleasures of friendship are not only permanent and great but they are all-transporting. What do you think the meaning of 'all' is in this connection? They are all-transporting?

**Subhuti:** In every way.

**S:** In every way, entirely transporting. What does transporting mean? What is a transport? A transport is a sort of rapture, an emotional that carries you out of yourself, which transports you, which carries you as it were out of yourself, as it were, away to another place. In Johnson's time, not so much nowadays, one spoke of a transport of happiness, a happiness which was so great to carry you out of yourself or beyond yourself or away from yourself.

And not only all-transporting, all-divine. It's almost like, not so much like an Ode to Friendship, more like a Hymn to Friendship.

**A voice:** Ecstasy.

**S:** Ecstasy, yes, how ecstatic! Thy pleasures are ecstatic. I mean it suggests to the Buddhist mind *priti* here, the pleasures of friendship are *priti*-like, they are rapturous, they are ecstatic. And all-divine, or as we would say they're completely skilful, completely positive, completely creative. You wouldn't have quite expected this from old Samuel Johnson - in fact it was younger Samuel Johnson writing, but he seems to have held to this throughout his life, even though he might not have written any other poems to friendship, he certainly acted on this sort of basis. As I said in the beginning of the study, he really did believe in friendship, he made friends and he kept friends, he was able to be a very good friend.

**Prasannasiddhi:** Quite something to say, to someone who is relatively young, to say that the pleasures of friendship are permanent requires quite a... (3-4 words unclear)... that confidence at such a young age.

**S:** He was certainly under twenty-five, possibly considerably under.

So:

When Virtues kindred Virtues meet,  
And sister souls together join,  
Thy pleasures, permanent as great,  
Are all-transporting, all-divine. [Pause]

You also notice Johnson's power, even here at a very early age, of very compressed expression, not a word is wasted. This must be the Latin influence.

**Prasannasiddhi:** Do you think actually that being young he might just not have (1 word unclear) more in terms of a unity, more in... kind of, carried out of itself.... not, you know, quite so sort of sober and exact...?

**S:** But the language is very sober and exact, it's very controlled language. This is a feature of all Johnson's writing. It is very powerful and packed with emotion very often, it's very, very controlled, very sober, at the same time very balanced. One notices that even here, it doesn't get out of hand. I mean, if you don't read it attentively you might think it as rather bold, rather prosaic.

**Subhuti:** Banal, yes.

**S:** Banal, not very romantic. It's a completely different style from that of the later romantic poetry. But it is a style and it is at least, one might say, a very noble style, at least that. It is certainly not lacking in emotion. It's the classical style in the best sense of the term.

**Subhuti:** You do have to pay very close attention to the weight of the words.

**S:** ...and the precision, yes, of the words or the precision with which the words are used. And even the grammatical construction, it's not always obvious at first sight because it is very concise. [Pause]

**Ratnaprabha:** One of... I can't remember it... one of Shakespeare's most famous sonnets talks about love in this way, doesn't it. It being sort of permanent and it seems from the context, it's speaking really of the same thing Dr. Johnson is talking about here.

**S:** Yes, that's the sonnet:

"...Oh no, it is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken..." (sonnet CXVI)

**Ratnaprabha:** Yes, that's right.

**S:**

"...It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come..."  
- Yes?

"...Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom..."

Hm, in other words, it doesn't change [Pause]. Then he concludes, this final couplet:

"...If this be error and upon be proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved."

(laughter) - Yes? Anyway, perhaps we should go on to the last verse and conclude.

**S:** Go on then, someone.

*Oh, must their ardours cease to glow  
When souls to blissful climes remove?  
What rais'd our Virtues here below,  
Shall aid our Happiness above.*

**S:** There seems to be a change of pronunciation here too. 'Oh must their ardours cease to glow/ When souls to blissful climes remove?' What are these blissful climes that he's talking about?

**Subhuti:** Heaven.

**S:** Heaven, yes. In other words, must friendship end, must the pleasures of friendship end, when we die and go to heaven? Must the joys of friendship end with death? Johnson doesn't believe so. Hm? But you notice he speaks of the ardours, the ardours of the pleasures of friendship. An ardour is a very strong term, indeed. What do you understand by ardour? The ardours of the pleasures of friendship, or the joys of friendship?

**Ratnaprabha:** It's a sort of warmth, burning with warmth.

**S:** Yes, ardour is burning warmth, yes, intensity. And here he uses the expression 'glow': 'Oh must their ardours cease to glow when souls to blissful climes remove?' Must the passion of friendship, must the joys of friendship end with death, when we go to heaven?

**Subhadra:** Doesn't ardour imply action?

**S:** Not necessarily... The adjective, of course, is ardent.

**Prasannasiddhi:** The root is to burn, Latin.

**S:** To burn, yes, hence glow, that which burns glows. What is heat, you know, to the sense of touch, is light to the sense of sight. Then he answers his own question and says 'What rais'd our Virtues here below, Shall aid our Happiness above', because Johnson, being a Christian, believes that once you've reached heaven, well, in a sense you need to make no further effort. Heaven is a state of pure enjoyment, pure bliss. But he says there will be such a thing as friendship and the pleasures of friendship even in heaven, but there the function of friendship will not simply be to assist us to be more virtuous, we shall have to think about virtues or of being virtuous because we will be in heaven. There the function of friendship will be purely one of enjoyment. You see what I mean? 'What rais'd our Virtues here below', what raised, what strengthened our virtues here on earth, what helped us to be more virtuous, there in heaven will simply help us to be more happy. In other words, in heaven, Johnson is almost saying, we shall enjoy friendship for its own sake. It won't have any sort of function, it won't have any purpose, not even any moral purpose because all moral purposes will have been attained, by virtue of the fact that we are in heaven, but friendship will not come to an end. Then, friendship will be just a source of additional pleasure, additional happiness. It's almost as though he thinks of heaven as the state of irreversibility.

**Prasannasiddhi:** It's also interesting how he thinks of heaven in terms of communication.

**S:** In terms of communication, yes, but he doesn't say anything about God, that's rather interesting. Although undoubtedly he believes in God but it's as though he'll at least be aware, at least be conscious, of your friends and enjoy the pleasure of friendship with them. I mean, you might say well - Johnson would have considered this blasphemy, no doubt, but you could even say well - if you've got your friends with you in heaven, you don't need God. (laughter) But he might have countered it by saying, well, God is your best friend. But then we might counter it by saying, well, how can God be your friend at all because God is conceived of as a monarch and a monarch can't have friends, he can only have flatterers, he can only have people singing hymns in church! (laughter) Which is one of the grossest flatteries that you can imagine!. I mean you can think, for instance, from the Buddhist point of view, of Sariputra and Mogallana. They remained friends after becoming Arahants. Well, they didn't need their friendship for anything, they weren't sort of urging each other on to gain further heights, because they'd gained the highest heights, according to the Hinayana at least, but they remained friends. So why should that have been? They just, so to speak, enjoyed their friendship and their communication, as it were, for its own sake, they had nothing to gain from it at all any longer, but they continued being friends. So friendship hasn't only an instrumental value, as Johnson in fact is saying here. Friendship is as it were, of value of its own, on its own account.

**Mangala:** Do you think maybe it's not until you get to a relatively high level that you can enjoy friendship in that sort of way?

**S:** Oh yes. Well, Johnson is clearly making the point because he puts off that sort of friendship to heaven. He seems to suggest it's hardly possible on earth, and that you're still in what he would have called a state of probation. So you need the help of friendship, or your virtue needs the help of friendship.

**Mangala:** I heard that you'd said recently something to the effect that you can't really become a friend unless you are a stream-entrant. Er...?

**S:** Ah, yes, but this was within the context of quite an extensive discussion, one has to refer to the whole discussion.

**Mangala:** Ah...

**S:** Where was this study group, which study group was that...? I'm afraid you'll have to listen to...

**Voices:** *Sigalovada Sutta*

**Mangala:** I mean, does that therefore follow that much of what perhaps even in the Movement could go under the name of friendship, isn't technically really friendship?

**S:** Well, yes in the same way that much that goes as Going for Refuge isn't in fact Going for Refuge. In other words, as one can distinguish between provisional Going for Refuge and effective Going for Refuge and real Going for Refuge, so one can distinguish between friendship in the same sort of way. Much that passes for real friendship is in fact

only effective friendship, using those terms quite strictly. And in that same way, in that same sense, only a Stream Entrant can really be a friend, which is almost what Johnson is saying, that friendship for its own sake is possible only in heaven.

**Mangala:** I think you said 'most of what passes for friendship is only effective friendship' or...

**S:** I'm using the word effective here in the same sense that I use it when I speak of effective Going for Refuge as distinct from real Going for Refuge.

**Mangala:** Ah, right, right

**S:** It seems that those distinctions have almost universal validity. One could have even a whole lecture on, well, provisional friendship, which is mild acquaintanceship, and effective friendship and real friendship and even absolute friendship, which is the friendship of the Buddhas for one another.

**Mangala:** It makes friendship therefore seem like a very definite spiritual goal or achievement...

**S:** Indeed, yes.

**Mangala:** ...rather than something which exists on the mundane and...

**S:** Yes, indeed, well, one sees that friendship is a possibility at all the different levels of reality. [Pause]

**Prasannasiddhi:** Although once you got up past a certain point you'd find it difficult to call it 'friendship'.

**S:** Hm hm [chuckling] At least you have to spell it with a capital 'F', maybe it should all be in capitals, or specially illuminated letters.

**Mangala:** Would you say, Bhante, that all Order Members, anyway, should be seeing friendship in this sense as actually part of their ideal that they are actually trying to achieve...

**S:** (interrupting) Oh, yes, definitely, definitely.

**Mangala:** ... in quite a conscious way?

**S:** Yes, indeed, yes. Well, the mere fact that one is practising the Metta Bhavana should be enough to make that clear. If you're practising Metta Bhavana, well, you're trying to be everybody's friend, hm?, that's your ideal.

**Mangala:** You're trying to be everybody's friend, but there's also the ideal that, you know...

**S:** Well, that's the ideal, that's the principle.

**Mangala:** You actually can't be very close to more than just a few people?

**S:** You can't. So you have to make a beginning there, and hope that as you rise to higher levels of spiritual development, your capacity for friendship will increase. [Pause] There's not much point in wondering what you'll do when you get a thousand friends when you're even yet making proper, or even full use of the few that you've got. [Pause] So it is surprising, in a way, how much Buddhism one can, so to speak, dig out of a little poem like this by Samuel Johnson, of all people, not even one of the Romantic poets, but giving expression to, in a sense almost being the culmination of, a quite important Western tradition of the meaning and value and significance of friendship. I mean, certainly he must have read Aristotle's 'Ethics', he must have read Bacon's essays, very likely he'd read Montaigne, all of whom have written on friendship. He had his own experience of friendship. For him, friendship was a very definite, very solid sort of virtue, or, perhaps I shouldn't say virtue, it was a very definite characteristic of the virtuous man, something that was within the reach only of the virtuous man, and very definitely a human quality, in fact more than a human quality, a heavenly quality, an angelic quality.

**Cittapala:** Why do you think that is that apparently there seems to be a sort of paucity in developing friendship, just to go by recent reportings in or recent sort of discussions, people saying that they need to develop friendships, they are becoming more aware of...

**S:** Well, I think part of the question is that people have become aware of the limitations of their existing friendships. I think people have now a much more adequate idea of friendship, so that they can see to a greater extent how far they fall short of that, just as years ago people had a certain idea of Going for Refuge, well, they've got a greatly advanced idea of Going for Refuge now, so they can appreciate now the shortcomings of their old conception of Going for Refuge. So in much the same way, people have got an enhanced conception of friendship and they can see, they begin to see, how far they've fallen short, so they begin to feel that, well, they've never been a friend, they've never had a friend. So that's just expressive of the fact that they do have this enlarged ideal of friendship, or they are expecting much more from friendship, they see much more in friendship than they saw before.

### **End of side one, side two**

They are demanding more of themselves in terms of friendship, expecting more of themselves, and in a sense, of other people, too. I think this is a characteristic of spiritual life generally, and spiritual development, that you see more and more in things that are required of you. You see more and more in the whole, say, concept of non-violence, you see more and more in the whole concept of truthfulness. In the same way, you see more and more in the whole concept or ideal of friendship, you see that it's not just a simple, straightforward, relatively superficial thing as you thought at first. But it's partly that, it's partly that.

**Mangala:** I think also, like, in the past there's been a lot of talk about... perhaps friendship, perhaps more so of metta, but in a rather abstract kind of way, developing metta for all living beings but not perhaps very much emphasis given to actually developing... how that, well, just to developing friendship.

**S:** Well, it's well known that it is much easier just to sit down and just feel good or feel goodwill, even, towards people. It's much easier to do that than actually to be a friend, or to behave in a friendly way towards them in actual practice, be helpful and at least not get in their way.

**Cittapala:** Do you think that's a good, sort of, litmus test to the effectiveness of one's, I suppose, one's spiritual... trying to develop one's practice in one's life, looking at one's friendships?

**S:** Well, not only that, but looking at the sort of people that you are friends with. That can tell one a great deal. The old proverb says 'birds of a feather flock together', you are known by your associates. Who are your friends? Someone might say: tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are. If your friends are all film buffs or all stamp collectors or all cyclists, well, that will surely tell you something about you.

**Cittapala:** (laughing) ... or players of tennis.

**Prasannasiddhi:** Is it actually easier to develop these emotions in meditation than it is... I mean, you said it is easier sitting down than actually...

**S:** Well, some people do find that I wasn't suggesting that it was really easier to do than that, some people still don't find it at all easy. But I think that if one has been, say, practising the Metta Bhavana for year after year and apparently quite successfully, but you still don't seem a very friendly person or to be doing much for other people, then some doubt may possibly be cast upon the nature or quality of your Metta Bhavana practice, certainly upon its intensity. I wrote a little skit on that years ago for the Mahabodhi Journal that some of you might know of. Based on the life or the actions of someone I actually knew who was quite well known in the Buddhist world at that time.

**Cittapala:** It seems almost that people spread themselves rather too thinly. Maybe they are trying to be friends with too many people and that in itself prevents one from...

**S:** I think some people like it to be that way.

**Cittapala:** It's the sort of like the chicken-and-egg-situation, it sort of feeds itself.

**S:** Some people are capable of being quite warm and quite genuinely friendly with quite a lot of people. But even a person of that sort, I think, needs to limit himself to a smaller number of people, to go very, very far it seems.

**Cittapala:** Do you think that the main factor is actually time, more than anything else, just the conscious decision to spend time with somebody?

**S:** I think if one is serious about becoming friends with someone, one has to accept that one will have to devote a certain amount of time to it. I think, if one isn't thinking in those sort of terms, one isn't really taking the friendship very seriously, because if you really feel friends very strongly with someone, as you sometimes do when you are very young, like when you are at school, you will actually without thinking about it very much, spend quite a lot of time, maybe all your spare time, in the company of that other person, that school friend, perhaps. Listening to people's life-stories in Tuscany, there were several instances where someone had had a quite close friend at school, when maybe eight, nine, ten, and had had just this one friend year after year, and had spent all his spare time with that friend

without thinking about it, not thinking, well, if I want to develop a friendship.... it just happened. You just liked that person, he liked you, so you spend all your spare time together. You didn't give it a thought, it just happens, it was natural, it's what you wanted to do, so it happened.

**Cittapala:** But one doesn't see, one doesn't notice that happening so much in the context of people I know.

**S:** So why do you think that is?

**Cittapala:** Well, I'm not sure. I was just wondering whether it's something to do with the sort of structuring which we sort of put ourselves... the way we organise our lives so that we can't spend a lot of time with any one particular person... The only structure where you can do that is in effectively marriage... seems to be actually permissive to that.

**S:** One Order Member, who is living and working with another Order Member, wrote to me recently about his efforts to keep up the friendship and the difficulties and he was just relating just one little difficulty had occurred, and his efforts to cope with it and then he put in brackets: 'it's just like being married' (laughter) And in a sense that's true, you know, but only in a sense, of course.

**Mangala:** I think also, like... maybe like with kids, too, they are much more spontaneous and less self-conscious and...

**S:** (interrupting) Also, they have got free time, they haven't got responsibility, they haven't got to think or worry about anything except maybe their schoolwork. Once they're free from school, outside school, they can go roaming here, roaming there, they can go out, they can do whatever they like, they can talk, they can play, they can play around, they can do whatever they want to do, unless they've got very strict parents, who want them home by a particular time. But under normal circumstances you can pursue your school friendships, you can spend time with your school friends, if you want to, you're free. Maybe that is quite an important factor.

**Mangala:** And also I think it's true that adults generally have much more difficulty in making friends than kids do because they are just so much more inhibited and less...

**S:** Well, it's not only that, I mean, adults have got purposes, they've got interests, I mean using 'interest' in the sense of selfish interest, they've got things that they want to get out of you, whereas that isn't quite the same with children, well, at the most they want your marbles or they want to borrow your bike, it's all quite simple and straightforward, more often than not he'll say, you know, can I borrow your marbles? or can I borrow your bike? But with adults you don't always know what the other person wants of you so you're not quite so open, you're a bit closed or a bit suspicious, a bit cautious, and also, no doubt, in the case of children, emotions are more free, more spontaneous. I don't think we can deny that.

**Subhadra:** (unclear) perhaps spend a long time, say, do a lot of meditation, say, and having done that you've got something to offer to your friends... (2-3 words unclear) whereas kids don't do that so much.

**Ratnaprabha:** I would have thought that, at least in my own case, I think, a lot of the reason I haven't developed very deep friendships is because things actually start to get uncomfortable once you get below a certain depth. You can be very friendly and warm with people to a certain level, but then it starts to sort of threaten one's secure ego, something like that, when it gets to a certain depth. I suppose it's back to this intimacy thing, if you really do start to get intimate with somebody, if both people are sort of aspiring individuals then you will start to... (unclear few words)

**S:** But don't the pleasures of friendship, so to speak, compensate for all that?

**Ratnaprabha:** I think they definitely do, yes, but I think that fear is inhibiting. [Pause] I think often we tend actually to structure our lives so that we can avoid spending a lot of time with people rather than not being able to spend a lot of time with people because we've got this objective structure that we can't escape.

**S:** Johnson used to set up definite situations within which he could meet his friends and pass time with them, that's why he started his famous clubs, so that they would all definitely meet together, once a week, and spend the whole evening together.

**Prasannasiddhi:** Famous clubs? What were these famous clubs?

**S:** His clubs, which were quite famous in literary history, the club, which was the last one, I think, survives even down to the present time. It was just a dozen or so men, who knew one another quite well, who agreed to meet at a certain tavern, in a private room, once a week and spend the evening happily together just talking. Just some of them drinking, some of them eating, and some of them puffing their pipes. Johnson usually drinking just water and he'd spend the whole evening, he'd be very reluctant to go home. He was usually the last to go home. He wouldn't go home until about two or three in the morning, very often. He'd spend the whole evening well talking. Some of them were the most brilliant men of their day. Some of these clubs had members like, not only Johnson, but Gibbons, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Burke, Goldsmith, Boswell, all these people, spending the whole evening together in a single room, and knowing one another intimately and meeting week after week and maybe some of them meeting together during the week as well. So there's some record of some part of their conversation in Boswell's 'Life of Johnson'. One of its sort of special features. So Johnson in his older days was never happy unless he had a club that he could go along to and... They weren't like modern clubs, they were just sort of what we'd call a dining club, they'd pay their tuppence every evening, or whatever it was... (laughter) you know, spend the evening and... Johnson drew out rules for his clubs: 'Every man should spend his own tuppence and no-one should spend less than tuppence' and so on 'No one should swear' and so on and so forth. They still have these rules that he drew up. They just met in a room in a tavern.

**Cittapala:** I suppose this other problem about friendship is that one doesn't actually admit to the pleasure which one derives from one's friends. So in a sense not admitting to it, that can't compensate for the fear which also one experiences from pushing against the barriers.

**S:** I wonder why one doesn't like to admit to the... It may be, it's also because people are overwhelmed by, sort of, utilitarian ideology, they are always on the make, and friendship doesn't seem to have any meaning or purpose, you should only make friends with someone who can help you in your career, help you get on, give you useful contacts and all that sort of thing, you don't think in terms of just making friends for the sake of making friends.

**Ratnaprabha:** And that spills over even into the Friends, the same utilitarian ideas about...

**S:** Though of course it may be spiritual or pseudo-spiritual utilitarianism.

**Cittapala:** But nevertheless, you say that friendship actually has an instrumental value.....

**S:** Yes!

**Cittapala:** until one reaches...

**S:** Yes, but then again, as Subhuti said, you mustn't separate the means too much from the ends.

**Cittapala:** But that would indicate you had to exercise some care in deciding who your friends are going to be?

**S:** Well, it's not only that. You have to exercise some care in understanding friendship correctly, understanding the true nature of friendship. If you understand the true nature of friendship, well...

**Cittapala:** The rest will follow.

**S:** ...the rest will follow. You'll choose friends with whom it is possible to... or choose to be friends with people with whom it is possible for the ideal of friendship to be fulfilled.

**Mangala:** You say that, er, for one's development... would you say that deep friendship is necessary?

**S:** Well, it seems in a way a pity to discuss it in such terms!

**Mangala:** Ah, oh...?

**S:** Do you see what I mean?

**Mangala:** No. (laughing)

**S:** It makes it so sort of crudely instrumental.

**Mangala:** Ah! Maybe more about me...

**S:** Hm... (laughter)

**Mangala:** No, that's not... well, yes, in a way, I suppose, I did mean it like that, in as much as you would say, well, yes, if you're going to develop, well, you must meditate, you'd probably say yes to that and, you know...

**S:** I'm not so sure! (laughter) I'd probably confine myself to saying, well, if you don't meditate, you're unlikely to develop.

**Subhuti:** If you are developing you will be developing deep friendships. Perhaps you could put it like that?

**S:** Yes, indeed, yes. It's the measure of your development. You can hardly say of someone: "he's really very developed... he's really very advanced... very Enlightened... because he doesn't have any friends!"

(laughter)... doesn't particularly want to have any friends." [Pause] Really you can't separate means from end in such a hard and fast sort of way.

**Mangala:** But perhaps you could put it, like, spiritual friendship, or deep friendship, is a component of one's spiritual development.

**S:** An aspect or dimension of it, yes.

**Mangala:** ...an important aspect.

**S:** Yes, and if that aspect isn't there, well, your spiritual development is not complete, or at least is not all-round, not sufficiently many-faceted.

**Prasannasiddhi:** Perhaps also the often mentioned fact that, in the Friends, it does seem people move around quite a lot, that's also...

**S:** Yes, mobility of modern life militates against friendship, well, there was Johnson sort of staying put in London for fifty odd years, I think it was, with just a few excursions, and most of his friends likewise, apart from those who died, they were just there!

**Mangala:** Then that further raises the question why there's so much moving about in the Friends. I think, perhaps because people aren't really making strong friendships where they are...

**S:** No, I think modern life itself tends to be much more mobile, because of our facilities of transport.

**Mangala:** Well, I was saying, perhaps just simply within the Movement...

**Subhuti:** I think it went the other way round, when people come into the Movement they bring their mobility with them, they get slowly s... a bit...

**S:** Well, in many cases, if they hadn't been mobile, we never would have seen them and they never would have seen us!

**Subhuti:** Yes, yes.

**Prasannasiddhi:** Perhaps also some modes of... it's necessary people should move...(unclear)

**Ratnaprabha:** You can always move around together, can't you.

**S:** Yes, that's true. You could move around from life to life together apparently. Yes, why not move around together. Well some people do, some people do think in those terms.

**Subhuti:** It was quite interesting yesterday, when I had two groups with the Mitras and I started off by getting them to just briefly recount their history in the FWBO, where they've been and what they've done, all of them apart from one had been to at least three centres over the course of between sort of three and four or five years.

**S:** You mean being regularly connected with three centres?

**Subhuti:** Yes. And several of them complained that as a result of that they didn't really know anybody in any great depth. And at least two or three of them said that they had decided they were going to stay somewhere, because they felt the need to develop stronger friendships.

**Mangala:** I think it's often been that people actually move on because they have not got any good friendships in the situation, or perhaps they find it irritating...

**S:** That suggests they haven't been patient enough, or haven't realised that, well, perhaps they haven't realised, in the first place that friendships do take time to develop, and also that they take time to build up, and they themselves have to do something, and just sit there waiting like the proverbial wallflower, waiting for someone to ask them to dance, they have to go and do the asking. We did talk about that in the *Sigalovada* study group, too, that some people just have this tendency of just sitting and waiting for people to make friends with them, not themselves going and making friends with anybody, and then complaining that they don't have any friends. [Pause]

**Prasannasiddhi:** There's increased mobility in modern lives of people in general, and this must have implications.

**S:** It must have some implications, but I notice, I think I have commented on this before, that when I go back to India, most of my old friends there are where I left them twenty odd years ago, where I first met them thirty odd years ago. They're occupying the same houses. I can think of... there's so many of them, all the people I know really well are living exactly where they always were living. I can just go along and be sure of finding them there, even though you haven't written to each other for years and years, they're there, they haven't moved. Because look at me. Well I'm probably quite excessive, I've lived in thirty or forty different places at least, to their one place.

**Prasannasiddhi:** ... a friend of the dust... It seems on one level we have got a lot of mobility, we can go places and we can travel about but on other levels we've got quite...

**S:** It's as though one needs to find a middle way between stagnation - people becoming stagnant in staying in the same place - and rootlessness. You mustn't stay so long in the same place that your roots sort of get congested and start rotting and at the same time you do need to have some roots, you mustn't, sort of, always be tearing them up as soon as they start putting themselves down. [Pause]

Anyway you've probably got to put your roots down somewhere else. Anyway, we've made some start on Samuel Johnson, haven't we. It did occur to me, I have an anthology of his wit and wisdom, I'll look it up and see whether there's anything under the heading of friendship, let's see.

**Mangala:** Can I possibly keep this, then?

**S:** Oh, yes, keep them, and maybe propagate the gospel. Take your own study. After all it's only seven verses, it's quite a pleasant one-day study, you can spend a morning and an afternoon on it even, quite easily, quite comfortably. All right then.

**End of Seminar.**

*Re-transcribed by Dharmachari Silabhadra, March 1996*