

**The Kalama Sutta Seminar  
held at Padmaloka, July 1980**

Kalama Sutta (Anguttara Nikaya i.188), trans. Soma Thera, Wheel Publication No. 8, Buddhist Publication Society.

Those present: Ugyen Sangharakshita, Subhuti, Vajradaka, Punya, Manjuvajra, Abhaya, Nagabodhi, Surata, Joss Hincks, Alan Miller, John Leah, Johnny Baker, Clive Pomfret.

S: Would someone like to read the first sentence?

Subhuti: "The Kalamas of Kesaputta go to see the Buddha. I heard thus. Once the Blessed One, while wandering in the Kosala country with a large community of bhikkhus, entered a town of the Kalama people called Kesaputta."

S: "I heard thus." I assume that you know who is supposed to be speaking.

\_\_\_: Ananda.

S: It's Ananda. So how or why Ananda?

Subhuti: Because he recited the suttas to the council of elders at Rajagriha.

S: Yes, well not only the suttas, all the teachings after the passing away of the Buddha. So one of the signs, or if you like one of the distinguishing marks, of a sutta is that it begins with this phrase - "evam me suttam" in Pali - "thus have I heard" it's usually translated, or "I heard thus". There is a discussion among scholars as to whether the next two words, which are "ekam samayam", belong to the end of this sentence - thus have I heard at one time - or are the beginning of the next sentence, but we won't go into that now, but this sentence is the sentence which traditionally introduces a sutta. That is to say, something which was said by the Buddha, a discourse delivered by the Buddha, heard by Ananda, repeated by Ananda after the Buddha's death to the assembly of monks, and then transmitted to their disciples. Ananda wasn't always, of course, actually present, but he had a sort of understanding, a sort of agreement, with the Buddha that if the Buddha gave a discourse when he was absent, on Ananda's return the Buddha would repeat it to him so that he could commit it to memory and have a full repertoire of all the Buddha's sayings and discourses. Ananda was described traditionally as 'bahushutra', one who had heard much or, as we would say nowadays, one who is learned. All right, so much for "I heard thus".

"Once the Blessed One," the Buddha, that is to say, "while wandering in the Kosala country with a large community of bhikkhus, entered a town of the Kalama people called Kesaputta." I think I'd better start referring to the Pali text which I have somewhere. Wandering in the Kosala country. Wandering of course suggests to us something rather aimless, but the Pali idiom is 'carikam caramano' which means walking a walk, he was walking a walk or, if you like, progressing a progress, in the Kosala country. Have you any idea where the Kosala country was? Have you any idea about ancient Indian geography? The Buddha's personal activities seem to have extended mainly over two areas - Magadha and Kosala - which were two separate independent kingdoms. The Sakya republic was under the political influence, not to say domination, at that time, of the kingdom of Kosala. So the Kingdom of Magadha

lay more to the north-east of [2] northern India. It was mainly what is nowadays the state of Bihar with perhaps some parts of Bengal, whereas Kosala corresponded roughly to the present-day Uttar Pradesh, so it's the north-western, not the extreme north-western but the middle north-western part of northern India. Say from Benares up to Delhi and perhaps beyond.

Subhuti: Magadha?

S: No that's Kosala. The first one was Magadha. So this is altogether quite a large area that the Buddha was accustomed to wandering over. He had, apparently, regular routes which he followed, with regular stages where he stopped and met people and talked.

So "Once the Blessed One, while wandering in the Kosala country with a large community of bhikkhus, entered a town of the Kalama people called Kesaputta." With a large community of bhikkhus, the number is not actually given. Sometimes we are told the Buddha wandered with 1250 bhikkhus. That may be a later exaggeration but no doubt a lot of bhikkhus would wander with him and the expression used is bhikkhusanghena - a bhikkhu sangha, and it is rather interesting this is translated "a large community" because what does that suggest? The bhikkhu sangha is translated "community", at the same time they are wandering. What does that suggest?

Nagabodhi: That what bound them wasn't just locality, possessions, property, and so on.

S: Yes, right. It suggests that a community is not necessarily a residential community. A community can be on the move. You can have such a thing as a travelling spiritual community. Well, clearly you had on this occasion. They weren't all staying in any particular vihara, in a particular place. They were wandering. They were walking their walk with the Buddha from place to place throughout Kosala but they remained a sangha, they remained a community. So it is quite important to bear this point in mind: that a spiritual community is not necessarily what we call sometimes a residential spiritual community. We don't have to be all in our spot together all the time in order to be a spiritual community. In our own case the Order is a spiritual community, whether it's actually assembled in the same place at the same time or not. Even if it isn't, it's still a spiritual community. The fact that you are a spiritual community does not require you to be tied, or chained even, to one particular spot. Of course, yes, you may be. There is such a thing as a residential spiritual community and sometimes it may help the spiritual community to be residential, but the spiritual community isn't necessarily residential. You could have one that's 'on the wing' all the time. You could even have, conceivably, a floating spiritual community or a flying spiritual community. (laughter)

So, "Once the Blessed One, while wandering in the Kosala country with a large community of bhikkhus, entered a town of the Kalama people called Kesaputta." All right let's go on then.

[3]

\_\_\_: "The Kalamas who were inhabitants of Kesaputta heard: Reverend Gotama, the monk, the son of the Sakiyans, has, while wandering in the Kosala country, entered Kesaputta. The good repute of the Reverend Gotama has been spread in this way: Indeed, the Blessed One is thus consummate, fully enlightened, endowed with knowledge and practice, sublime, knower of the worlds, peerless, guide of tamable men, teacher of divine and human beings, enlightened, blessed."

S: All right. "The Kalamas who were inhabitants of Kesaputta heard: Reverend Gotama, the monk, the son of the Sakiyans, has, while wandering in the Kosala country, entered Kesaputta." Now you've probably realized that in those days means of communication were rather primitive. There were of course no newspapers, there was no radio, probably people didn't even write letters. Letters were known only for purposes of business correspondence. But none the less "the Kalamas who were inhabitants of Kesaputta heard." They heard about the Buddha, they heard that the Buddha was coming. In India, even today, by word of mouth rumour travels very fast indeed. It's really amazing how quickly some news flies, especially if some well known personality is travelling around. News flies from village to village very quickly indeed, and this must have been all the more the case in the Buddha's time when people relied entirely on word of mouth for their information, for their news. So "the Kalamas who were inhabitants of Kesaputta heard: Reverend Gotama, the monk, the son of the Sakiyans, has, while wandering in the Kosala country, entered Kesaputta." You see at once we encounter here slight nuances in the translation "Reverend Gotama". What does that suggest to you?

Abhaya: Vicar-like.

S: A vicar-like figure, yes. Well what does the text say? The text says bho Gotamo - bho is just a polite term used in referring to somebody. In the Dhammapada you remember the brahmins are referred to as 'bhovadin' - those who use the expression bho. They use it to one another, they speak politely to one another. They do not usually use it when speaking to non-brahmins. You see what I mean? So bho is just a polite prefix. You put bho before somebody's name if you just want to be polite and respectful. It is used with regard to lay people as well as with regards to those who have given up the world as monks or wanderers. So it doesn't have this sort of ecclesiastical ring that 'reverend' has. It's really quite impossible to translate it. I mean if you were translating into French you could say 'Monsieur Gotama' - that would be a bit nearer than "Reverend Gotama". "The monk" - again, monk, well that has all the wrong connotations, it's samana. The distinction was in ancient India, in the Buddha's time between brahmana and shramana. The brahmana was the one who followed the traditional Vedic teaching, the traditional Vedic religion, especially in so far as it involved sacrifices and observances of various kinds. The shramana was the freelance spiritual aspirant, you could say. He'd cut himself off from all home ties but he'd cut himself off from all conventional brahminical religion. He did not perform any ceremonies, he did not perform any sacrifices. He relied usually more on meditation, asceticism, and so on.

So in the Buddha's day there were the brahmanas and there were the shramanas, and the shramanas were a very mixed bunch indeed. We encounter all sorts of shramana or samana teachers in [4] the Pali canon. Apart from the Buddha himself the best known was, of course, Mahavira, who was the founder of the religion we now know as Jainism. So I think if one is thinking in terms of the religious life in India at the Buddha's time, you can think in terms, probably, of three groups. There were the householders who lived at home and followed various practices of folk religion, making offerings to sacred trees and groves and stones, and respecting those who had left the household life but themselves not aspiring to any kind of higher spiritual life. Then you've got the brahmins. The brahmins were householders but they lived usually on land given to them by the king, they lived on income provided by the king, and they spent a lot of their time reciting Vedic texts, performing sacrifices, very often for the king, and so on. And then you have the shramanas who were the freelance people, who belonged to neither of the previous two groups, though of course they were drawn from them

originally. They weren't lay people, they didn't live at home with their wives and families. On the other hand they weren't brahmins, they didn't follow the Vedic religion. They were looking for some new path, some other path of their own. They weren't satisfied with domestic life on the one hand, they weren't satisfied with the conventional Vedic religious life on the other. They were looking for an entirely new path, and some of them followed quite bizarre practices. So these shramanas moved around, they were a very free, a very unconventional lot, they moved around in search, as we would say now, of truth.

Abhaya: Were they looked down upon by the orthodox people?

S: Yes. The brahmins did not like the shramanas at all because the brahmins tended to think that they had the monopoly of religious teaching and religious knowledge, and in the Pali scriptures we often find, at least sometimes we find, occasions when the brahmanas refer very contemptuously to the sramana and very contemptuously to the Buddha and his followers, regarding them, naturally, as shramanas. They often referred to them or addressed them as 'wundaka' which is usually translated as 'bald pate'. (laughter) It means shaven one - 'baldy' you could say. Because many of the shramanas shaved their heads, which the brahmins did not do, so many of the brahmanas resented the shramanas, these sort of freelance practitioners of religion, freelance teachers who were just roaming around trying to find some new path of their own.

So the Buddha, originally, was a sramana in this sense. He left home, he may not have had some experience of brahminical teachings - that's rather obscure, but he certainly lived the life of a shramana, both up to the time of his enlightenment and even after his enlightenment. In the eyes of the general public he was a shramana. In other words he was one of these freelance religious people, wandering about from place to place, who had eventually attracted a following of disciples. He was often called the 'Mahashramana' - the great shramana, because he was particularly well known and particularly successful. But the general public saw him as a shramana, they saw all these other teachers and other freelance religious people as shramanas, that was the general term. It literally means one who is washed, one who is pure, or purified.

So the Kalamas who were inhabitants of Kosala heard bho Gotama, the shramana. That is how they would have regarded him. That is how they would have thought of him. They would have [5] used the expression 'bho Gotamo' out of politeness because he is an ascetic, he is a shramana, and he is a well known one, and they refer to him as samana - or shramana as it is in Sanskrit - to indicate the fact that he is one of those freelance religious teachers not following the brahminical tradition.

Subhuti: The shramana tradition seems to imply tremendous freedom of thought, freedom of action.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: Quite unusual in history.

S: Yes, yes as far as we can tell from the Pali scriptures which are our main sources of information for this whole period, provided the shramanas behaved reasonably decently they could profess almost any teaching as doctrine and follow almost any practice. They are not

supposed to make a public nuisance of themselves and they were not supposed to behave in a way that the general public regarded as undesirable from a moral point of view. They were not supposed to poach people's wives as they passed through the villages. But apart from a few basic things like that, like trampling standing crops as they wandered around, they were free to profess any teaching and follow any practice. They had complete freedom. And this is one of the notable features of life in India at that time. Even the brahmins, who disapproved of these shramanas and their teachings and their practices, made no attempt to persecute them so far as we know. They disagreed with them and grumbled about them, but there was no persecution. Far less still did the shramanas persecute one another as persecute the brahmins. There seems to be complete freedom of thought at that time in those areas, so that one can say that it was, in a way, a very creative period. There is, of course, sometimes the comparison made between Periclean Athens at least, and northern India in the days of the Buddha, because in Periclean Athens or what we could say Greece, at that time, there were a number of wandering teachers or wandering experts going about from place to place professing to teach wisdom, and they were called 'sophists'.

In the same way, in northern India during the Buddha's time, there were a number of these wandering teachers going about professing to teach a way to liberation. The Buddhist term for them collectively, the teachers as distinct from the ordinary sramanas that is to say, was 'terthikas'. A terthika or tittia is a ford maker. A ford is a place where you cross the river, where it's shallower and easier to cross, so the tertha maker, the terthankara, is the ford maker in the metaphysical sense. He is the teacher, the wise man, who finds a way across to the other shore, the other shore of the unconditioned you can say.

So these ford makers correspond, one could say, to the wise men, the sophists, the wandering sophists of Greece of roughly the same period, within a hundred years or so, and just as among the sophists you had Socrates - who was regarded as a sophist by the populace and was ridiculed as a sophist by Aristophanes in one of his dramas - in the same way you had Socrates among the sophists you had the Buddha among these tertha makers, standing, as it were, head and shoulders above everybody else. The difference being Socrates said, 'they profess to be wise, they think they are wise, they think they know everything. I don't think that. I know my own ignorance.' [6] Whereas the Buddha did so far as we know claim that he was in fact enlightened, whereas the other teachers were not.

But you have the same picture of this restless ferment of mental and spiritual activity with these wandering teachers enjoying apparently complete or almost complete freedom of thought, and in each case one particularly conspicuous figure of great historical importance: Socrates in the case of Greece and the Buddha in the case of northern India. So you can imagine how excited the Kalamas would become when they heard that bho Gotama, the samana, the son of the Sakiyans, was coming. The text says 'bho Gotamo Sakyaputto Sakyakula pabbajito Kesaputtam anupatto' which is a little more forcible than the English. The Sakyaputto, the son of the Sakiyans, from the Sakyan clan - pabbajito: who has gone forth. This is how they describe him.

Oh, there's something completely missing in the translation. Do you see what it is? "Monk" seems to conflate both samana and pabbajito. Yes, there's something quite important missed out here. So bho Gotama the samana, the son of the Sakiyans. What is missed out is Sakyakula pabbajito - 'who has gone forth from the Sakya clan' - which is in some ways the most important point of all, that he is pabbajito, one who has gone forth. You're familiar of

course with this idea of going forth - pabbajja. So one who has gone forth is called pabbajito. He is gone forth, that is to say he has given up the household life, he's cut himself off from his particular group, his clan, the sakyakula. He's become free, so to speak, in that sense. I think we've discussed this whole concept of going forth quite a number of times, haven't we, on various occasions, so we won't linger on it now, but just note that the translation leaves this out.

So he has arrived at Kesaputta. So you see how the Kalama people identify him. First of all he's bho Gotama, this respectable figure you could say - Gotama, the monk, the samana, the freelance religionist, the son of the Sakyas. Well obviously in India people are very keen on identifying you by your tribe, clan, or family. So they know him as someone who is a member of the Sakya tribe, but he's gone forth from that tribe. They know that too. He has left it. They are familiar with that institution of pabbajito, of going forth, going forth from the household life, going forth from the family life, as a wandering - well we can only say religious mendicant - in search of truth. And he has arrived in Kesaputta.

So what do they further go on to say. Let's hear that. Oh, that was read wasn't it? So "the good repute of the Reverend Gotama has been spread in this way." Good repute is kalyano kitti. Kalyano - we'll deal with that word in a minute - is of course good, noble, spiritual. Kitti is repute, fame. The good or noble or auspicious fame has been spread concerning him. And then we go on to the iti pi so Bhagava araham - you're very familiar with these formulas I take it because we recite those so many times, and there has been a whole study seminar - devoted in part to them - that's been transcribed and edited, so I don't propose that we discuss this in detail. It's available in detail already in that seminar on the threefold vandana. So we'll take that as read and as explained. But you encounter these phrases descriptive of the Buddha as well as of the Dharma and the Sangha repeatedly throughout the Pali texts. This is what they hear about the Buddha. It's the standard sort of description of the Buddha, that he is of this sort. Whether actually the Kalamas heard and understood that distinctly on that particular occasion - that's another matter. It could be that the compilers - Ananda or his successors - add this sort of passage regularly whenever [7] this sort of situation arises. But in any case we know that the Kalamas of Kesaputta have heard something good about the Buddha. They have a rough idea who and what he is and they're very interested that he has arrived in their country. So let's go on.

\_\_\_: "He makes known this world with its beings, its maras and its brahmas, and the group of creatures, with its monks and brahmins, and its divine and human beings, which he by himself through supernormal knowledge understood clearly."

S: So there's something further which is said about the Buddha. He makes known this world. He's already been described as lokavidu so it's as though that is gone into in greater detail, and this again is a very stock passage which occurs repeatedly in the Pali canon. "He makes known this world with its beings, its maras and its brahmas, and the group of creatures with its monks and brahmins, and its divine and human beings, which he by himself by supernormal knowledge understood clearly."

So he makes known this world. Let me just find the Pali. These Pali texts have the unfortunate habit of missing out these stock passages and you have to look back to a previous text where it has occurred. Yes. So he makes known this world with its - the text is a little different to the translation - "So imam lokam sadevakam", that is, he, this world together with

its gods, its maras, its brahmas, its samanas and brahmanas, its people, its men and gods, by his supernormal knowledge makes known. So what do you think is the significance of this passage? That the Buddha makes known the world with all these different kinds of beings. Do you know what these different kinds of beings are? Maras? Do you know what maras are?

Abhaya: Like sprites.

S: Sprites.

Subhuti: They're a little more malevolent than that.

S: A little more malevolent than that. Maras are a kind of deva. They belong to the kamaloka. The higher devas belong to the rupa and arupalokas, especially the brahmas. At the time of the Buddha's enlightenment you may remember - or just before the Buddha's enlightenment - there is an episode which is usually called his Maravijaya - his conquest of Mara. Mara is explained as being fourfold. There is Mara in the sense of Mara as the personification of defilements and passions; that's klesa mara. Mara as the personification of the five skandhas; that's called khandha mara, Mara as conditioned existence itself. Then there is Mara as death; and devaputta mara, mara the son of a god, that is to say Mara as an actual being existing on a particular level, that is to say within the kamaloka but on a slightly higher level than that of human beings. So Mara is sometimes spoken of in the singular and sometimes spoken of in the plural. So when spoken of in the plural as here you've got the conception of these lower gods, mischievous, a bit malevolent, a bit spiteful, sort of always trying to trip up human beings if they get an opportunity.

So the maras. And brahmas? Brahmas are beings as it were existing on a much higher level, a sort of meditative level. There are many many of these meditative levels and many beings [8] are reborn there as brahmas, usually for thousands, tens of thousands, even millions of years.

And the text says "Sadevakam, samarakam, sabrahmakam". Oh, the translation misses out the gods. It says here he makes this known with its beings, its maras and its brahmas, but actually the text says his devas, his maras, and his brahmas.

\_\_\_: They come in later actually. We've got some divine beings in the list later on.

S: Ah, that's devamanusanam. That's additional. So the text says he this world with its gods, with its maras, with its brahmas, with its samanas and brahmanas, its people and with gods and men, he with his supernormal knowledge, having realized makes known. It's interesting to find the translation by such a good scholar as Nyanaponika departing even so much from the original text. [This is actually Soma Thera's translation, and Bhante corrects himself later on, tr.]

\_\_\_: Quite unnecessarily.

S: Quite unnecessarily. But anyway you get the general picture. It's the ancient Indian world picture, it's the Buddhist world picture, it's a picture of a world made up of different planes. You can think in terms of the division according to the kamaloka, rupaloka, arupaloka beyond which of course is Nirvana, and one has beings on these different planes, on these different levels. You've got human beings, you've got lower gods, you've got higher gods, gods even

higher. So the point is, regardless of the details of this world view, this world picture, that the Buddha has experienced it all and made it known. So what do you think is the point of that, that the Buddha makes known this world, "so imam lokam"?

Nagabodhi: I imagine in those days there was no sort of science or any sort of tradition of people with a complete world view. Somebody who did seem to understand how things were, what made the world tick, would stand out. You'd be free.

Subhuti: It actually puts him beyond the world.

S: It puts him beyond the world, yes. The cosmology itself, very broadly, very roughly speaking, must have been clear to everybody. They all believed in maras, they believed in devas, sometimes believed in brahmas. Perhaps they had some experience of these different realms, these different levels, though the point about the Buddha was that he'd experienced and known and made known it all by his abhijna, that's the key term here. So what is abhijna?

\_\_\_: Supernormal.

S: This is usually translated supernormal. So jna is knowledge, you've got prajna, you've got jnana, these are all words based on this root jna - to know. So here it is abhijna. So abhi is a prefix meaning higher, further, superior, as we have abhidharma: the further, the higher, the superior Dharma. So abhijna is the higher knowledge, or sometimes it's translated the superknowledge. So what is that superknowledge?

\_\_\_: Is it knowledge that comes through meditation?

S: One could say that, yes, it's knowledge that comes through meditation, but it's more than that. At a later time probably - it's [9] not clear whether perhaps during the lifetime of the Buddha or afterwards, there was a set of six abhijnas evolved, and these are very often referred to in accounts of the enlightenment of the Buddha. Do you remember the six? There's a fairly - I won't say detailed but - there is an account of them in the Survey. Perhaps you should

make a note of that. It's page 154 [5th-7th editions, tr.]. There are two groups of these abhijnas, one mundane and the other transcendental. There are five mundane abhijnas, and one transcendental abhijna which is the abhijna proper as it were. I'll just run through them just to refresh your memories, those that have read them before.

The first abhijna seems to refer to the creation of what is called a mind-made or mind-formed body which is capable of travelling from place to place independently of the physical body, capable of passing through rock, capable of passing through water, and so on. This is the first abhijna, the creation of this mind-formed body. The second is perhaps more familiar to us and is called clairaudience, the ability to hear things at a distance. And then there is the third, what we nowadays call telepathy, the ability to understand the thoughts of others; fourthly, recollection of one's previous existences, and fifthly a sort of clairvoyance especially with regard to the disappearance of beings from their present level of existence and their reappearance by way of rebirth on some other level of existence in accordance with their karma.

So these are the five mundane abhijnas. So you can say that these five mundane higher

knowledges are sort of extensions of ordinary or normal human faculties. Do you see that? They're not transcendental, they're mundane. For instance if you take this question of telepathy, well, usually we do understand other people's thoughts. Usually of course we understand other people's thoughts because they express those thoughts to us, but again sometimes we can pick up those thoughts, we can know what they're thinking, we can know what they're feeling, especially if we know them rather well, even without their expressing anything. Do you see what I mean? So this can be extended, this can be developed until you can actually know - you can actually tell - what somebody is thinking, even at a distance. So the Buddha and some of his more developed disciples, they had that sort of power, that had that sort of faculty. But it's only an extension and development of what one might describe as an ordinary human faculty, an ordinary human knowledge carried to an extreme almost.

So all these five lower abhijanas as they are called are of this kind. They're extensions of ordinary human faculties beyond the ordinary. Or you can say they pertain also to the mundane. They don't have reference to Nirvana, they don't have reference to the ultimate, to the absolute. But the sixth one does and this is the destruction of - or the knowledge of the destruction of - the asavas. I take it you know what the asavas are. It's a very important basic term. Have you come across it?

Nagabodhi: The biases.

S: It's the biases. They're usually translated biases. The bias towards sensuous experience: kamasava; the bias towards conditioned existence itself: bhavasava; and then the bias towards non-existence, and sometimes a fourth is added - bias towards views, especially in the sense of false views. Again you'll find the information about the asavas in the Survey.

Nagabodhi: Is the first one sensuous experience or existence? [10]

S: I usually render it as sensuous experience. Again these have all been dealt with on other occasions. I don't want to go into them in detail now.

So one can say that it's the sixth abhijana which is the abhijana. So on account of his destruction of the asavas the Buddha has gained enlightenment or has gained - what shall one say - gained the realization of the ultimate. He's not affected by the asavas any more. He has a completely free mind, an unconditioned mind. So the point is that with this free mind, with this unconditioned mind, with this mind that has realized the superknowledge in this higher transcendental sense, he knows the world. It's as if to say the particular details of the cosmological framework, the particular details of the world view on the mundane level, are not of any great importance. The important point here is that the Buddha has seen it all with his higher knowledge. So what does that mean? If he's seen it with his higher knowledge, it means he's seen it in its true nature. Usually this is explained in the Hinayana as seeing it in terms of being essentially unsatisfactory, impermanent, and without any ultimate reality. In Mahayana terms of course it's seeing things as void, as sunyata. So you might say that the Buddha not only sees this world - after all everybody sees the world, all the people in Kesaputta who are looking forward to seeing the Buddha, they also see the world, there's nothing remarkable about that, everybody sees the world in one way or another - but the Buddha sees the world in a different way. The Buddha sees the world in depth, the Buddha sees the world in its ultimate reality. In other words he sees it with his higher knowledge.

So the actual details of this world that you see with your higher knowledge in the case of the Buddha don't matter. You can have a modern scientific world view or you can have an ancient Indian as it were mythic world view, but the important point is that whatever world view you have on the mundane level you see it in depth in the light of your higher spiritual, transcendental knowledge and enlightenment.

So this is the point really that is being made here. Forget all the details about the maras and the brahmas, etc, etc., The details aren't important. What is important is that the Buddha has understood the whole of conditioned existence in principle, in depth, as it is, by means of his supernormal knowledge, his abhijna. All right go on from that.

Surata: "He sets forth the Dhamma, good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, possessed of meaning and the letter, and complete in everything; and he proclaims the purified life of celibacy. Seeing such consummate ones is good indeed."

S: So it's interesting that the next sentence begins, "He sets forth the Dhamma". So what do you think is the significance of the fact that this "he sets forth the Dhamma" comes immediately after the previous paragraph in which it is said that the Buddha "makes known this world ... which he by himself has through supernormal knowledge understood clearly"? It suggests that "he sets forth the Dhamma" comes immediately after that.

Subhuti: He doesn't just make known a view of reality, he also makes known a way of realizing reality.[11]

S: Not quite that, but it makes it clear that he sets forth the Dhamma out of his in-depth knowledge of existence itself. His setting forth of the Dhamma is an expression of his deeper understanding of things. He sets it forth out of his supernormal knowledge of this world. In other words the Dhamma is the direct expression, the communication if you like, of the Buddha's knowledge of reality, of his enlightenment experience. So "He sets forth the Dhamma, good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end." First of all good.

Good is of course kalyana. Kalyana - this is a very difficult term to translate. I'll tell you what the dictionary says and then you can ... Kalyana - is 'beautiful, charming, auspicious, helpful, and morally good.' So it's the beautiful and the good. I'll read those again. Kalyana is beautiful, charming, auspicious, helpful, morally good. So I find for instance Mrs Rhys Davids in 'Birth of Indian psychology and its development in Buddhism' refers to this, and there are some quite important things that she says here: 'Friendship and the Friend' - she's talking of course about kalyana mitra - 'are words far more frequent in the Pitakas' - that is the Buddhist Pali texts - 'than in the Upanishads' - that is the ancient Hindu texts - 'and whereas the guru as confessor and virtual dictator to his pupil in later Hindu literature is unknown in both Vedic and Pali sayings, the kalyana mitto, the lovely 'friend', is highly appreciated, albeit his position as such is nowhere made institutional.' That's a very important point. His position as such is nowhere made institutional. We find Ananda saying the half of the God life - that's a translation of brahmacharya but we're going into that in a minute - is friendship, companionship, intimacy, with the lovely, or with one who is lovely. There's that alternative translation possible. Kalyana - a word which may be equated with (kalakagathos) or with the (prophil), whatsoever things are lovely, of [the] Epistle to the Philippians etc., etc. So in the same way as in Greek tradition, Greek thought, Greek culture, you had this sort of conflation of the good and the beautiful, you get that same sort of conflation in this word kalyana in the

case of the Buddhist tradition. What is kalyana is what is beautiful and what is good. There isn't that sort of cleavage between the ethical and the aesthetic; they're brought together. So it's not just the good friend, it's the beautiful friend. It's not that you've got two separate ideas, one the good and the other the beautiful, the good IS the beautiful, the beautiful is the good, for ancient Indian Buddhism as for ancient Greek thought.

Surata: Could you make the point about its not being institutional again?

S: This is what Mrs Rhys Davids says. "And whereas the guru, as confessor and virtual dictator to his pupil in later Hindu literature is unknown in both Vedic and Pali sayings the kalyana mitto, the lovely friend, is highly appreciated, albeit his position as such is nowhere made institutional."

Surata: So it's much more of a sort of emotional sort of relationship rather than a directly teacher-pupil relationship.

S: No, it doesn't say that. The kalyana mitra relationship very often IS the teacher-pupil relationship, but the point she is making is that whereas in Hinduism or at least post-Vedic Hinduism the guru-pupil relationship is that of a dictator to the one he [12] dictates to, in the Buddhist tradition it isn't like that: it's a spiritual friendship. But even though this is highly appreciated, she says, even then it is not institutionalized. That is the important point. In other words it is something quite individual, something person to person.

Manjuvajra: In connection with that in practical terms for us one thing that I've found with people, with mitras looking for kalyana mitras, is they feel that they get to a certain stage and they want a kalyana mitra, so they look around for one who will as it were fill the role. It seems as though we need to put more emphasis on the fact that that relationship develops, it comes out of just an ordinary human relationship rather than having to look round for someone to act in a certain function.

S: Yes, right, because it starts when for instance you - say, as a mitra - know a number of different Order members - maybe you know fifteen, maybe you know twenty, maybe you know more - but then you start finding, you start feeling, that you're rather closer to, say, two or three of those than you are to any of the others. You get more out of being with them, you like them more, you get on with them better, they maybe seem to like you more or take more interest in you than, say, other Order members do, so you naturally come closer together. So then you start thinking at that point in terms of two of those people being your kalyana mitras. It's not so much that you are out of touch with Order members generally, or you know them very little, or you see them as distant figures, or you've heard that mitras when they reach a certain stage ought to have kalyana mitras so you think well I suppose I'd better so you start looking round for a couple of Order members who would as you said fulfil that role. It isn't like that. That would be looking at it in an institutional sort of way. It is something that grows and develops out of your present friendly relationships.

Johnny: So it's just a title you give something that's already there. It's just sort of natural.

S: Yes. When it is actually given, so to speak, the official recognition it's a recognition of something that is already there, the recognition being in making it fully explicit to you, to the parties involved, and to everybody else who may be concerned or interested. Anyway, here

the epithet kalyana is applied to the Dharma. It's the Dharma which is kalyana. So this is a quite interesting point because if the Dharma is kalyana, and if kalyana means beautiful as well as good, what does that tell us about the Dharma?

Abhaya: It's something which you respond to aesthetically.

S: Yes. That's a very important point. We usually think of the Dharma as something intellectual or something moral. For instance Dharma is often translated as doctrine, the doctrine. But if you take the Dharma as kalyana seriously you should be able to translate Dharma also as beauty. I know that is completely unconventional and unprecedented but why should you not, if the Dharma is in fact kalyana? Do you see what I mean? So it is not that the Dharma is simply the truth as we sometimes translate it, or the doctrine, or even the good or the law as we also translate it. It is also the beautiful. Now admittedly that aspect of the Dharma - [13] the Dharma as the beautiful - is not stressed in Buddhist tradition. It's certainly not stressed in the Pali Buddhist tradition. Perhaps it is in other ways later on in other forms of Buddhism, but on the strength of the Pali texts themselves there's no reason why we should not think of the Dharma in that sort of way. The Dharma is not only the true and the good, it is also the beautiful, and it might supply a sort of needed corrective if we thought of the Dharma more in those sort of ways, because the beautiful is something which is apprehended by the imagination. So if you think of the Dharma in terms of the beautiful then we're stressing also the (importance) of the imagination. It makes it clear that it isn't a question of the Dharma being something intellectual which we understand intellectually. The Dharma is the beautiful, which we appreciate aesthetically, which we apprehend imaginatively, which we enjoy and so on.

Manjuvajra: You make a connection there between the beautiful and the imagination. I've not heard that before. Why is the beautiful connected with imagination?

S: Well what is it? What faculty is it in one that appreciates beauty? If in the object you have beauty, well, what do you have corresponding to that beauty in the subject? What's the word for it? I use the word imagination following in a way Blake and Coleridge one could say. You can say the aesthetic sense, but aesthetic is a much broader term; it can refer to ordinary sensations, it's much too broad perhaps, but imagination is that higher as it were spiritual faculty - if you like to use the word faculty - which apprehends beauty or responds to beauty, experiences beauty.

But again it is not that it's just aesthetic so to speak. There is an element of actual insight in that imagination which is not necessarily reducible to intellectual terms. Just as there is in the beauty also the truth, perhaps not quite in the Keatsian sense, but you cannot altogether separate beauty from truth or from goodness. The Dharma, as we've seen, is all three. So in your imaginative response to beauty there is an element of - yes - aesthetic appreciation and response in the highest sense, an aspect of insight, of intuition. Beauty does give you some clue to the nature of reality, you could say, and also there is an ethical element also, in as much as your whole being is tuned in to that experience of the beautiful through your imagination, you yourself are transformed, at least you are refined and sensitised. Shelley says something of this sort in 'A Defence of Poetry' you may remember. I quoted it in 'The Religion of Art' so you'll be able to read it when 'The Religion of Art' comes out.

But anyway this is all to underline the fact that the Dharma, in as much as it is described as

kalyana which is not only good but lovely, the Dharma itself must be thought of as the beautiful as well as the good and the true. So this Dharma is kalyana in the beginning, kalyana in the middle, kalyana in the end. So beginning, middle, and end of what?

\_\_\_: One's spiritual life.

S: Yes, one can look at it like that. Usually there are two interpretations given traditionally. That the Dharma itself is kalyana in its beginning, middle, and end, that is, throughout the whole teaching, throughout the whole Dharma it is kalyana, it is always good for you under all circumstances, always beneficial.[14]

Another interpretation is the beginning, middle, and end of life itself, throughout your whole life. But you can combine those two and say, well, throughout your whole spiritual life the Dharma is kalyana, is beautiful, is lovely, is attractive, is beneficial to you. These are very well known formulas. We get these throughout the Pali canon, that the Dharma is kalyana, "adi kalyanam, majjhe kalyanam, pariyosanakalyanam," etc. These are very well known phrases, very well known formulas.

So he sets forth the Dharma, good - you see how weak the term good is here - in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, possessed of meaning and letter, satham, which is "satham, savyanjanam". Now what does that mean? Satham is pretty clear, that's meaning, but savyanjanam, this is translated by Nyanaponika [sic] as letter. Vyanjana really means characteristic mark or attribute. For instance one speaks of the characteristic attributes of masculinity and femininity - itivyanjana and purisavivanjana, so it comes to mean something like expression or letter. Do you see what I mean? So it has been pointed out that if this phrase goes back to the Buddha's time, in as much as in the Buddha's time the teaching was not transmitted in writing, there cannot be a distinction made in that sense between the spirit and the letter. Do you see what I mean?

\_\_\_: No.

S: The distinction between the spirit and the letter is a distinction which has meaning only within the context of a literary tradition. If there was no literary tradition as regards religious teachings at the time of the Buddha how could the Buddha have used an expression like spirit and letter or an expression like spirit and letter had been used in that sense? So if it was used at all it could not have been spirit and letter but meaning and expression. Do you see what I mean? There is the inner meaning and there is the way in which you express that, so if that phrase was used in the Buddha's time it must have been used in that sort of sense. So the Dharma which is good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, is possessed of the meaning and the letter. It's as though the spirit of the Dharma is there and the expression of the Dharma is also there. Do you see the importance of the distinction or do you see the distinction first of all between the spirit and the expression in this sort of way? Not between spirit and letter in the literary sense but between the meaning, what you're really trying to put across, and the form in which, the way in which, you put it across: the expression; and that in the case of the Dharma both are there.

Haven't you ever had yourselves the experience of struggling with a meaning that you cannot express? There is a sort of apprehension of a meaning in you, in your mind, in your experience, but to express it and to put it across, that is another matter altogether sometimes.

That isn't nearly so easy. So in the case of the Dharma there is a meaning but also there is an expression. That meaning has been fully expressed, fully communicated, therefore. Or one could say the Dharma is not just a set of rather abstract principles but those principles have been worked out in some detail, so that the principles are made all the more clear, all the more evident.

Surata: It's much more expressive of actual sort of doing isn't it? Of actual action than to say spirit and letter. It's like it's [15] kept all in your head, in your understanding.

S: Yes, if you say spirit and letter it says, well, the meaning and just the words on the page, but it isn't really like that, it's the meaning and the expression of that meaning. It need not be just in words. I mean gesture can play a part, a look can play a part. So the Dharma is possessed of meaning and expression. Nyanaponika [sic] translates meaning and letter but really it should be meaning and expression.

And "complete in everything", the Dharma is "complete in everything" - "kevalaparipunnam". When you say that the Dharma is complete in everything - complete and perfect would perhaps be better - what do you mean?

\_\_\_: It relates and refers to everything.

S: One could ask the question, well, complete and perfect in regard to what?

Surata: All you need to know to develop enlightenment.

S: Right, yes. The needs of one's individual development.

Nagabodhi: I was thinking about what you were saying about beauty. It's also complete and perfect in relation to itself. If beauty appeals to the imagination it appeals to a sense that wants to go beyond the mundane, but only the Dharma actually ultimately satisfies that, so it actually forms a complete circuit which even ordinary beauty doesn't. It's like an ultimate beauty.

S: Then we come on to "and he proclaims the purified life of celibacy." "Parisuddham, brahmacariyam pakaseti." Now here we come to something which is not very well understood. The translation of brahmacarya as celibacy is completely inadequate. So what does brahmacarya really mean? Well, first of all what does cariya mean? The verb cariti is "he walks" simply, so cariya is a walk, but metaphorically cariya means practising, it also means living, it also means experiencing. For instance we've got the bodhicarya, haven't we, in the Bodhicaryavatara. The bodhicarya is the practice of bodhi, it's the experience of bodhi, the living of bodhi, the living of enlightenment, or the life of enlightenment. So what is brahmacarya? What is brahma to begin with?

\_\_\_: God.

S: No that's going a bit too fast. Brahama.

\_\_\_: Exalted.

S: It's something like exalted. It is great. Brahma comes from a Sanskrit root meaning to swell, to grow, to burst or to burst forth, so that it is something which has grown, which has swelled, which has swollen, which has burst or burst forth, therefore something which is big, something which is great, something which is eminent, something which is sublime, something which is noble. This is what brahma means in the basic sense.

So brahmacarya means the practice of what is noble, the practice of what is great, the experience of what is great, the living of what is great, or, if you like, the spiritual life. This is what brahmacarya means. So in the Pali texts brahmacariya means [16] the spiritual life, dhammacariya means you could say the religious life. Bodhicarya in the Mahayana means the life of enlightenment.

\_\_\_: The stream entrant.

S: No, that's quite different - that would be under dharmacarya. Bodhicarya is bodhi for the sake and the benefit of all, whereas the experience of stream entry is on the path of the Arhant which the Bodhisattva, so to speak, avoids. So sometimes I compare these three. This is going a little bit out of the way but nonetheless let's just do this and then come back to brahma and brahmacarya. You've got brahmacarya which is the spiritual life in general, the life dedicated and devoted to higher goals. So one can use this term brahmacarya, use this term spiritual life to cover any life which is oriented to a higher goal whether Buddhist or non-Buddhist, because in the Buddha's day brahmacarya was used by other teachers - the word appears in the Upanishads, it appears in the vedas. So brahmacarya, the spiritual life in general, in the widest sense.

Then you've got dharmacarya, Dharma here meaning the Buddha's teaching. So dharmacarya means the specifically Buddhist spiritual life. The kind of spiritual life which is led by one who has gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. But you can go further than that: the bodhicarya. Within Buddhism there is the distinction of Hinayana and Mahayana. The goal of the Arhant and the goal of the Samyaksambuddha, which is the goal of the Bodhisattva. The goal of Arhantship is the goal of enlightenment for oneself alone. The goal of Samyaksambuddhahood, the goal of the Bodhisattva, is enlightenment for the sake and the benefit of all. So that is the bodhicarya. So if brahmacarya is the spiritual life, if dharmacarya is the Buddhist spiritual life, bodhicarya is the altruistic Buddhist spiritual life. Do you see how it grows? You see how it develops from brahmacarya to dharmacarya to bodhicarya? You could even go on to vajracarya, but we won't do that this morning.

But carya in all cases means walking, practising, living, experiencing. So to come back to brahmacarya, brahma doesn't only mean noble, eminent, sublime, great, in a general way, you've also got the so-called brahma gods, the brahma devas. So what are these brahma gods? What are these brahma devas?

\_\_\_: Refined beings.

S: You've got of course in Indian Buddhism as in all forms of Buddhism this idea of different levels of existence, and this idea of different levels of existence finds expression in the threefold division of the kamaloka, the world of sensuous experience within which we live, the rupaloka, the world of archetypal form, and the arupaloka, the formless world. So one experiences the rupaloka and arupaloka only in states of meditation. The kamaloka is what

one experiences in one's ordinary state. Or even if one goes a little beyond that one is still in the kamaloka. One has to go quite far in meditation, one has to go into the dhyanas in order to experience the rupaloka, and then into the arupadhyanas in order to experience the arupaloka. One has therefore the subjective aspect which is the dhyana state and the objective aspect which is expressed as the world, subjectively dhyana, objectively loka. So the entry [17] to the loka is through the corresponding dhyana. If you are in a certain kind of experience you will find yourself so to speak in a certain kind of world. Experience constructs its own world one could say, in the long run at least.

So, another point, one of the differences between the kamaloka world and these higher worlds, that is to say the rupaloka and arupaloka, is in terms of sentient beings, that there is no distinction of sex, there is no distinction of male and female. So what does that suggest about the higher spiritual life?

\_\_\_: It's a synthesis of polar opposites.

S: It's a synthesis of polar opposites, especially of the opposites which we experience as the male and the female. So the brahmacarya is the experience of a spiritual state in which the masculine and the feminine, the male and the female, have come together and are integrated. So that therefore there is no sexuality in the sense of an attraction to a polar opposite, and that is where the brahmacarya in the sense of celibacy comes in. Do you see what I mean? There is no polar sexuality. There is no polarization of sexual experience in that sort of way. So when it is said of the Buddha "he proclaims the purified life of celibacy" he is not as it were advising that everybody should lead a celibate life as a sort of discipline; what the Buddha is proclaiming is the leading of a higher spiritual life, the leading of it to a point where all these polar opposites are fused and blended and balanced and integrated in such a way that there is no attraction towards a polar opposite in the way that we normally experience it. And because there is no attraction to a polar opposite you'll be leading a life of brahmacarya. The higher life is a non-polarized life, an integrated life. Do you see what I mean? Otherwise it's rather a sort of anticlimax to all this, that the Buddha preaches a life of celibacy. No it's much much more than celibacy in the ordinary sense. So "parisuddham brahmacariyam" - completely purified non-polarized higher spiritual life.

So one can see that this is a quite important point because behind the purely - what shall I say - physical, sexual polarization there is an emotional polarization which gives its force to the physical polarization.

\_\_\_: Do you mean like in terms of aggression or masculinity say on the one hand, and domination?

S: One could put it in those terms, yes.

\_\_\_: And on the other hand just a passivity.

S: Well it's not only that; it is the deeply felt need in an almost compulsive, even sometimes neurotic, way to complement oneself with one's opposite from the outside. And this of course is linked with a physical complementarity and it finds its natural expression through that. The one reinforces the other.

So one could say the physical polarization loses its - what shall I say - its compulsiveness or its urgency if it is not backed up by this psychological polarization. Do you see what I'm getting at? The fact that you are physically a man or [18] physically a woman isn't the important point. It is not that that gets in the way of your spiritual development, or even the fact that you function as a man or function as a woman, but that behind your functioning as a man or behind your functioning as a woman there is a very one-sided and polarized mental state which finds an expression and in a way a justification through the one-sided physical functioning. It doesn't matter if the physical functioning is one-sided in a sense. What matters is that through that physical one-sided functioning a mental and emotional one-sided functioning and being finds expression.

However spiritually developed you may become you'll never become a hermaphrodite, not in the present cycle of evolution, but you can become as it were spiritually androgynous, which is quite another matter, but your spiritual androgyny will still find its expression through a masculine physical personality, not through a hermaphrodite physical personality. Do you see what I mean?

Is this clear? Because it's the culminating point about what is said about the Buddha's teachings here: that it is a teaching about brahmacharya so it's important it's understood properly.

\_\_\_: Because it's so often tied up with celibacy the association is still there. When, for example, people of the opposite sex get together the polarization immediately happens. Well, it's there physically, but by implication on an emotional and a mental level as well.

S: One could go so far as to say that if you're physically celibate but are still mentally and emotionally one-sided there is no spiritual value in your celibacy except perhaps that it may be an exercise in self control or strength of will or whatever. If you are physically celibate it should be the expression of an integrated mental and emotional state. Or even if you are not physically celibate and even though you express yourself on the physical level in an apparently one-sided way, what you will be expressing in that way will not in itself be one-sided. In other words even the physical expression will be considerably modified.

And also there's just one more word before we stop for a cup of tea or coffee: pakaseti. The whole structure of the Pali here is quite different from the English. We have the verb coming at the end, which gives a completely different impression. I'll just read you the whole sentence. So - that is he the Buddha - "dhammam deseti adi kalyanam majja kalyanam pariyojanakalyanam sattham savyanjanam kevalapariyuppannam parisuddham brahmachariyam pakaseti." - He, it's translated, proclaimed, he publishes, he makes clear, he illuminates - and this comes at the end. So the literal translation would be 'he the Dharma teaches which is kalyana in the beginning, kalyana in the middle, kalyana at the end, which has meaning and expression, which is complete and perfect, which is the perfectly purified brahmacharya, that he makes clear'. It's even more direct in Pali than I've managed to make it in English. So this "pakaseti" comes at the end. "Parisuddham brahmachariyam pakaseti" - he proclaims, he illuminates. In modern Indian languages we've got the same word - pakasam, for a publication; to publish something is ?pakastahay in Hindi - not only to proclaim it but to illuminate it. It's brought out into the open as it were. So you get the [19] same sort of connotation here of not only publishing, not only making known, but of illuminating, of lighting up something. So this is what is said of the Buddha's teaching. It's not that he just

teaches or explains; he illuminates, he publishes, he makes known. And what he makes known is the brahmacarya.

Let's stop for a cup of coffee.

[end of tape 1, start of tape 2]

S: ... he's not doing so much for Buddhist Publications Society now. He [i.e. Nyanaponika, tr.] had an operation a couple of years ago. He's German.

Alan: Do you think his translation reflects his Germanic background, that he's using English words whereas the German equivalent may have been...?

S: I think his English is very good but I think there's sometimes an element of Germanic pedantry in his writing, but usually he's reasonably clear. (long pause)

[break in tape recording]

... I think the main characteristic in a way is a sort of compulsiveness because the feeling of incompleteness is so strong that you want to complete yourself with your polar opposite so there's a sort of irresistible attraction towards that which you may be quite unable to control but as that polar opposite is outside you it can never be completely under your control. At the same time you need it, so there must be a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty and craving and so on.

Surata: It's like a hopeless task.

S: But if the opposite only appears to be an opposite. If the opposite is only physically an opposite, well, then you can enjoy it. The apparent opposite freely and happily and without any anxiety so to speak because you're not dependent on it.

\_\_\_: But that would mean a balance within yourself rather than in the actual opposite.

S: Yes indeed! When I say the apparent opposite I mean a purely physical opposite that a person, say, of the opposite sex is only physically an opposite, not psychologically an opposite. So there is no psychological compulsion to complete your own incomplete being by contact with your polar opposite.

\_\_\_: So they're not like a symbol feeling at that time?

S: They're not like a symbol. Right.

Nagabodhi: I tend to associate polar opposites with sexuality. Are there other major areas where...

S: I think I've said on another seminar that that is the paradigm of polarization, as it were.

Nagabodhi: Could you suggest others?

S: I think they all come down to that really.

Subhuti: Like sort of general dominance and submission. Any, say, work situation or whatever. Maybe they (?) used to that. [20]

S: Well, that is sort of on the sexual model as it were. If you want to dominate you have to find somebody to dominate who is willing to be dominated. In order to be able to be dominant you have to depend upon someone who agrees to be dominated. So how can you really consider yourself to be dominant? If you have a need to be dominant and you can't be dominant without someone allowing you to dominate them, well, are you really dominating them? You're at their mercy! (laughter)

\_\_\_: So we need to develop true dominance.

S: Yes, the truly dominant person is dominant regardless of whether there are other people around at all. In other words he's not dominant, he's just strong in himself. (pause)

\_\_\_: I remember once getting sort of really annoyed at women in general because they were so unreliable and you just couldn't rely on them. Then I realized that that was just totally unreasonable because it's totally unreasonable to rely on something that's conditioned anyway, because if conditions change you expect other people to change their views and attitudes.

S: I'm not sure what you mean by rely, because we were talking yesterday evening on the symposium about being able to rely on others in the sense of relying on others to keep their word. One needs to be able to rely upon people for there to be any human society at all, but one cannot place an absolute unconditional reliance on anything conditioned. A person may be thoroughly reliable and they may, say, fully intend to keep their appointment with you and may make every effort to do so, but they may be knocked down by a bus on the way, so you cannot rely upon them. You can rely upon them doing their best to keep their word but you cannot rely upon them not being prevented from doing so actually in that sort of way. So when you say it's because realizing that women are not reliable and one shouldn't expect that, whereas you SHOULD expect women to be reliable as human beings. They also are not exempt from keeping their word etc., etc., but you can't rely upon them absolutely any more than you can rely on anything of a contingent nature.

\_\_\_: That's what you actually try and do in a neurotic relationship.

S: Yes, of course. One has got the right to be able to have an ordinary human reliance on others through mutual understanding and decent social and personal relations, but not their absolute reliance which is usually emotional - well, ALWAYS emotional. One cannot rely on another person to complete you, because that means they've got to be always there which they can't be. I've seen people unwilling to allow their polar opposites to go round the corner to make a telephone call because the dependence was so extreme.

Johnny: I think reliance on a purely human level requires quite a bit of integration.

S: Well, yes and no. If one isn't already integrated there is a danger in any sort of situation of reliance that you will tend to over-rely or rely in a way that isn't quite justified. But sometimes it's quite a fine point to know when someone's, say, [21] let you down, but that is

something you have to accept because they're not perfect and when they need not have let you down or they should not have let you down if they were really a friend of yours. Sometimes you might conclude, well, I shouldn't have relied upon that person, but that's tantamount to saying that though I didn't realize it that person wasn't really my friend, because there are ways in which you can rely upon a friend subject to the provisos I've mentioned. Even if they do not manage to get to you as promised they haven't failed you, because there were circumstances stronger than them - maybe in the form of the bus that knocked them down - that they could do nothing about. But even though they didn't arrive on time they didn't let you down.

I think we ought not to go to the extreme of not relying upon others in a human way, either because we don't feel that others want to bother about us sufficiently or because we're sort of cynical about the whole question of human friendships and reliability and perhaps afraid of being disappointed.

\_\_\_: It's quite a difficult thing to come to terms with, to learn to live with and actually be able to trust other people to that extent, because after all in a way it's a lot easier to function by yourself because you don't have to take into account everybody else and everything goes according to plan. But then you are limited if you do that.

Alan: This relying on other people: isn't it somehow linked to cultural conditioning? Because in the Polynesian Islands - in New Zealand - there's a lot of Polynesians that migrate to New Zealand and there's something that's jokingly called Polynesian time where you ask a Polynesian to do something, or you'll be at a certain place, you can expect them within a couple of hours each side of it. They just have a totally different concept of time. You can ask them to do something and they may not even do it. They may forget, they may decide after they said they would that they won't do it. This seems to be part of their whole culture. They don't see themselves as doing anything wrong.

S: In that case, if they let you down or you feel that you've been let down by them there's been simply a failure of communication, because when you say I'll meet you at two o'clock and the Polynesian agrees, yes, I'll meet you at two o'clock, his two o'clock is not your two o'clock. You're at cross purposes. When you say two o'clock you mean right on the dot by the clock. He means roughly sometime early afternoon. It could be twelve, one, two, three, four - that's what HE means. (laughter) So you've got to make sure that you are in communication and that you are in fact speaking the same language. It's not that he has let you down; there has been a misunderstanding. It's the same with people in India. It is not that the Indians are unpunctual, just that the Indians do not have the same sense of time as modern Westerners, that's a quite different thing. On their own terms they've not let you down because when they said they would meet you at such and such a time they did not mean what you thought they meant because the same expression's got different meanings for each of you.[22]

Subhuti: The Greek islanders make a distinction between English time and Greek time.

S: In India you get the expression Indian time. Railways run by English time but social life is conducted more often than not by Indian time.

\_\_\_: They actually use those terms?

S: Oh yes, Westernized Indians will jokingly speak of Indian time, even Indian punctuality.

\_\_\_: I sometimes also call the other, real time. A meeting being called prompt at two o'clock real time. That means clock time.

S: I don't know if this is relevant but talking of time I've heard in Russia the railways throughout Russia - which has about four or five time zones - all run according to Moscow time. Whether that tells you anything about Russia I'll leave it to you to decide.

Anyway that arose out of relying on other people and that arose out of polarization and that arose out of celibacy. So what is important is that your relations with other people, whether sexually mediated or not, let us say, should not be themselves polarized. You should not relate to other people on a basis of polarization because that is a basis of need, even neurotic need, and that is a basis of greed, and that is a basis of compulsion, and that is a basis of unhealthy dependence, and that is a basis of anxiety, and that is a basis of suffering.

But if you relate to others in a non-polarized way, whether the relating is sexually mediated or not, if you relate to them in a non-polarized way as one integrated person relating to another integrated person, then you don't relate on a basis of need and greed and so on, but you mustn't fool yourself. It's very easy to think that you're more integrated than you actually are. The hallmark of the unintegrated person with regard to relationships - to use that term - is when you hear the words 'I can't live without you' or when you start feeling like that. You can value your contact with someone, you can really value their friendship, you can really value your communication with them, but nonetheless you should never be in a position of feeling and thinking and saying that you can't live without the other person, which sometimes people do feel quite literally. They can't live without them. They'd rather not go on living if they couldn't have that particular person, and that is surely a sign of great polarization. You might be sorry to part with someone. You might miss your happy healthy communication, but you go on living, living happily. So that is a sign of a non-polarized relationship, friendship, communication, whatever you call it. That you're still a whole human being without it, even though something that you value is no longer there. Because what you value was not a projected part of yourself and a complete human being can't suffer beyond a certain point in this sort of way.

Anyway let's carry on. There's one more sentence in this paragraph. [23] "Seeing such consummate ones is good indeed." What does the text say? It's "sadhu kho pana tatharupanam arahatam dassanam hoti ti". It's dassana - darshana in modern Indian languages. It's the seeing, the sight, the interview. So the English doesn't bring that out. Seeing such consummate ones is good indeed. Consummate ones is the arhants, the worthy ones, the spiritually worthy, the spiritually eminent. Just seeing them, just having the sight of them, the vision of them if you like, is good. I've referred to this often, frequently citing Ramana Maharshi and his darshans in Arunachala, South India, where he used to just sit at one end of the hall on a small platform, on a bed in fact on the platform, on a tiger skin, and he'd just be sitting there the whole day, and people just come and look at him. In India people still attach great importance to that, just to see a holy man, just to see him face to face, just to look at him. Sometimes they just sit there for hours on end not actually staring at him, it's looking, it's not staring. It's something receptive, but just to have this sight, just to have the almost eye-to-eye contact with him, this is considered very very important. It's considered a sort of blessing in itself. There's a sort of non-verbal communication set up and you're at the

receiving end, he's at the giving end as it were.

And most Indians when they go to see a holy man like this they've no question. They don't want to talk about anything, they don't want to discuss anything, they don't want to argue, they just want to sit and look at him and they feel that is enough, that contact is enough, that's what's called darshana.

So this is what these Kalama people of Kesaputta are saying, just seeing, just having the sight of, the darshan of, such spiritually worthy, spiritually eminent people, is indeed good, even if you don't have any discussion. If you just see them it's good. So they're suggesting it's really good that we have the opportunity to see the samana Gotama who has come wandering in our direction. All right let's go on.

\_\_\_: "Then the Kalamas who were inhabitants of Kesaputta went to where the Blessed One was. On arriving there some paid homage to him and sat down on one side; some exchanged greetings with him and after the ending of cordial memorable talk, sat down on one side; some saluted him raising their joined palms and sat down on one side; some announced their name and family and sat down on one side; some, without speaking, sat down on one side."

S: So then the Kalamas who were inhabitants of Kesaputta went to where the Blessed One, the Bhagava, was. It's not just went to, it's also upasankamimsu: they approached, they came near, they drew near. That would probably be more correct. "Then the Kalamas who were inhabitants of Kesaputta drew near to where the Blessed One was." Having drawn near, rather than having arrived, "some paid homage to him and sat down on one side": abhivadetva. Paid homage presumably by actually bowing down, presumably with a prostration. We'll see the significance of all this in a minute.

"Some exchanged greetings with him and after the ending of cordial memorable talk, sat down on one side." This requires a little of sorting out. Bhagavata saddhim sammodimsu sammodaniyam katham saraniyam. I looked all this [24] up. (pause) Yes. "Sammodimsu" Nyanaponika [sic] translates "exchanged greetings". Yes, this is correct, but it would be more correct to translate as "exchanged joyful greetings". There's very definitely the additional meaning of joy: the modimsu that is, the locative case is modana, which is joy, as in pramodana. So sam means something like together, so it's not only an exchange of greetings but a joyful exchange. The "greetings" is implied. So it suggests that the coming together was a happy occasion: they were glad to see the Buddha, the Buddha was glad to see them. It wasn't just a question of exchanging formal greetings.

Yes, it's the same with this word saraniyam which is also used, that also means making glad, making happy. I suppose this is what Nyanaponika translates as "cordial memorable" but it's more than that; it's making happy, gladdening. So one could say on arriving there some paid homage to him and sat down on one side, some exchanged joyful greetings with him and after the ending of those joyful greetings and talk, sat down on one side. There's a slight extension here: in the case of some people there is simply the joyful exchange of greetings, but in the case of others there is also some additional joyful talk with the Buddha. So you notice the element of joy is stressed here. The joy of the Buddha and these people coming together. It doesn't come out quite in Nyanaponika's version.

"Some saluted him raising their joined palms and sat down on one side." That is just like the

Indian way, the namaste. "Some announced their name and family." This is also quite common in India now. People tell you their name and they tell you their family or their clan. This is so that you should know their caste. This is of course considered very important in Indian social life. "And sat down on one side." To sit down on one side is polite. It's considered impolite usually to sit down right in front of someone, looking at him.

Nagabodhi: So it would be maybe just diagonally to one side. It wouldn't mean sitting there or it wouldn't mean sitting beside the Buddha.

S: No, it means diagonally rather than as it were facing front. If of course there's a lot of people and it's an occasion of darshan then that is a rather different matter. Someone usually will be seated immediately opposite but if it's just a few people especially, and you're sort of sitting round, it isn't polite to sit right in front of the teacher or guru or whoever it is, or guest, you sit to one side. That is considered more polite.

"Some, without speaking, sat down on one side." The word that is used here is *tunhibhuta* or "the without speaking, the silent". This is different from the usual word. Here it means the silence of assent. It isn't that they simply sat down without saying anything. They were happy to sit down without saying anything. Do you see the difference? It was a full silence as it were. They didn't sit down just because their minds were empty or they weren't very interested in what was going on or they didn't particularly want to see the Buddha. They just had nothing to say, they were quite happy as I said to sit down without saying anything. The fact they were silent does not imply that they were not as fully involved in the proceedings as were those who actually did say something to the Buddha. You notice they're not even represented as greeting the Buddha, they just quietly come and sit down. But the use of the word *tunhi* certainly doesn't suggest [25] that they were any less part of the proceedings. So the fact that people are described as behaving in this way suggests something - I touched upon it once or twice earlier on, I think in one of the seminar tapes that I've edited. What do you think that is?

Subhuti: People approach the Buddha in their own way.

S: People approach the Buddha in their own way. They're all respectful, they're all receptive, but they don't all express it in the same way. Some actually pay homage, actually prostrate themselves, they feel so devoted. This is what they want to do. Others greet the Buddha with folded hands, others have a little chat, others just sit down without saying anything at all, but they are all equally open to the Buddha, receptive to the Buddha, and apparently their different modes of approach to the Buddha are equally acceptable to the Buddha. He makes no comment. So do you remember why I was quoting this sort of passage which occurs quite often in the Pali scriptures, and even stressing it? In what sort of context?

Nagabodhi: I think you mentioned it in the question-and-answer session in India when people were asking about addressing bhikkhus and...

S: Yes, because it has become the custom in Buddhist countries, at least in some Buddhist countries, that you should greet a bhikkhu by prostrating yourself. Do you see what I mean? This has become the norm, this has become the standard, and many bhikkhus expect this, or even insist upon it. Even some bhikkhus who come to the West, they try to introduce this practice and they sometimes even say, well, Western Buddhists aren't very devoted. They

don't have much faith, because they don't show it in this particular way. But therefore I quote this passage to show that the Buddha himself did not insist upon any particular mode of showing respect to him, and if the Buddha himself didn't insist upon it, well, how can anybody else? But actually in Theravada countries especially a very strong point is made of this, and some bhikkhus feel quite uncomfortable even if some people don't approach them in the right way as they would call it. Even among some of the Tibetan lamas.

We heard recently that in one particular Tibetan Buddhist centre you're not allowed to meet the visiting lama unless you approach him in the right way. You're not allowed to approach him in your own way, which clearly should be polite and receptive, that need not necessarily involve a Tibetan type prostration, and so on.

Nagabodhi: At Rajneesh's ashram they smell you before you're allowed into the room. (laughter) Sniffers on the door. [In the 70s and 80s Bhagwan Shri Rajneesh (referred to later as Bhagwan) was the leader of a popular and notorious Hindu-based sect which encouraged sexual promiscuity., tr.]

S: I wonder who smells Rajneesh. I can't help wondering what he smells like. (laughter) I wouldn't like to think! I think this is very important, this little passage, and as I mentioned it does occur in a number of contexts in the Pali canon and it shows that so far as the Buddha was concerned a variety of approaches in this sort of way, even a variety of ways, of showing respect was quite acceptable. There was no one way. I've also quoted it in connection with questions that people have asked about how people should be expected to behave when they enter the shrine. Sometimes people ask, well, do we have to bow down to the image. Well, if you don't have to bow down to the Buddha [26] presumably you don't have to bow down to the image either. It's as you feel. What is important is there should be a genuine respect for what the image represents, for the ideal of enlightenment, and a genuine receptivity to that, but whether you actually sort of prostrate yourself, or you just bow, or you just sit straight down, that's up to you. We can't say that anyone is the Buddhist - I was going to say custom but no - one or another is the Buddhist custom but it isn't the real Buddhist practice that there should be just one way of behaving when you are in the shrine.

Of course it does look nice, it looks tidy, if everybody does the same sort of thing, but apparently that sort of untidiness didn't bother the Buddha so we perhaps need not bother about it ourselves too much. The main thing is that people should be receptive towards the ideal of enlightenment. It's not necessary or important that they should be regimented or made to show their reverence in one particular way. So it isn't that there is a Buddhist way necessarily. There's a variety of ways.

Nagabodhi: There is a line in the Ti Ratana Vandana talking of people who are worthy of salutation with folded hands. Are there other sort of phrases scattered about the scriptures that have given people the idea that there are...

S: Yes, but to say that you are worthy of it doesn't mean that you are obliged to get it, or that other people are obliged to give it. You are worthy of it whether you receive it or not. I remember when in India once a Muslim was introduced to a bhikkhu and in the Muslim way he sort of salaamed like that, and some of the bhikkhus were very scandalized. (laughter) Others were amused.

Manjuvajra: This gives a lot more of an intimate atmosphere as well to the place, rather than a very formal approach.

S: You still do find this in India. It's been my own experience sort of going around among the ex-Untouchables especially from village to village. Yes, people greet you in different ways. But I've also seen, say, the Ceylon bhikkhus or Thai bhikkhus explaining to these new Buddhists: you've got to bow down to the bhikkhu, do it three times, that is the practice, then you're a good Buddhist, which seems completely beside the point. All these people have got a natural reverence, a natural devotion, they're glad to see you, they should be left to show it in their own way. This is what one gathers from this particular passage; not that one particular way is to be insisted upon.

Alan: One method that isn't mentioned here but is mentioned elsewhere is actually circumambulating. Is that a later addition to the ...

S: No. This seems to have been the practice in the Buddha's day. That many people, especially his own bhikkhu disciples, felt great respect for him so they passed around, and you always keep - according to Indian tradition - the respected or revered object or person on the right, so you go round clockwise, and sometimes you actually pass all around that person just out of your feeling of devotion if that is your particular cultural context. We think it probably rather odd because that is not our cultural context, we've not been brought up in that way so we don't tend to do that sort of thing when we feel like being respectful. We might feel, for instance, that we ought not to keep a hat on. It might be that that [27] particular person didn't bother whether we had a hat on or not, but we've been brought up, say, in our culture that to keep your hat on - if you've got a Christian background at least - is not quite polite. So even in an Eastern context where people didn't bother, we might feel like taking it off because that would outwardly express our feeling of respect. Do you see what I mean? All right, let's go on.

Johnny: "The Kalamas of Kesaputta ask for guidance from the Buddha. The Kalamas who were inhabitants of Kesaputta sitting on one side said to the Blessed One: There are some monks and brahmins, venerable sir, who visit Kesaputta. They illustrate and illuminate only their own doctrines; the doctrines of others they despise, revile, and pull to pieces. Some other monks and brahmins too, venerable sir, come to Kesaputta. They also illustrate and illuminate only their own doctrines; the doctrines of others they despise, revile, and pull to pieces. Venerable sir, there is doubt, there is uncertainty, in us concerning them, 'Which of these reverend monks and brahmins spoke the truth and which falsehood?'"

S: So "the Kalamas who were inhabitants of Kesaputta sitting on one side said to the Blessed One: There are some monks and brahmins..." Not monks, it's "samanas .. and brahmanas" "venerable sir," They address him as bhante now. Modes of address in Pali are usually quite significant. They were referring to him earlier on as bho Gotama, now they're addressing him as bhante. Usually in the Pali canon it is only the Buddha's own followers who address him as bhante. It suggests perhaps that either they've been very much impressed by the Buddha and spontaneously address him in that way, or perhaps we're not given the whole story, perhaps the Buddha has been giving them some teaching which is not actually recorded here. Every sutta doesn't necessarily give us the whole story, everything that was said on a particular occasion, despite Ananda's retentive memory. But be that as it may they are apparently deeply impressed by the Buddha, consider themselves almost like his disciples, and they address him

as bhante and they therefore raise a matter which is a very important one for them. It's as though the feeling of the meeting, the mood, is quite serious. Perhaps they've had some preliminary discussion with the Buddha which has impressed them very much so that now they raise the thing that is really bothering them.

They say there are some samanās and brahmanas, bhante, who visit Kesaputta, they illustrate and illuminate, dipenti jotenti - yes that's quite literal, they light up with a lamp so to speak, they illuminate the lamp so to speak. They illuminate only their own doctrine. Doctrine is vada, as in Theravāda. Vada is something which is spoken, therefore your opinion, your doctrine, your teaching. So they illustrate and illuminate only their own doctrine, their own teaching. The doctrines of others they despise, revile, and pull to pieces. The words for despise and revile are khumsenti vambhenti. They both mean more or less the same thing. They could both be translated either as despise or revile, and the dictionary says they attack, condemn, they depreciate, and - this is quite interesting - opapakkhim karonti. Pakka or pakki is either feather or wing, they pull off the wings or pull off the feathers, or if you like pluck out the feathers of the teachings of others. In other words [28] they pull it to pieces. By depriving it of its feathers, by depriving it of its wings, they render it powerless, as it were. They sort of destroy in this way the teachings of others. They illustrate and illuminate only their own doctrines. The doctrines of others they despise, revile, and pull to pieces. They pluck out the feathers, pull off the wings, render it powerless, render it impotent.

"Venerable sir (bhante), there is doubt, there is uncertainty, in us concerning them, 'Which of these reverend monks and brahmins spoke the truth and which falsehood?'"

Manjuvājra: Is there any reason for repeating that passage twice? Some monks come and then some other monks come.

Subhūti: Contrasting different views. Some monks come and say this, some monks come and say that.

S: The whole style of the Pali texts very often is extremely repetitive. You'll encounter much more of this a bit later on. It's as though when it was elaborated, when it was repeated, when it was recited, to avert any possibility of misunderstanding they introduced all these permutations. For instance the Buddha isn't represented as saying "get rid of greed, hatred, and delusion O monks," he says "O monks, get rid of greed, O monks get rid of hatred, O monks get rid of delusion," and sometimes in some parts of the canon these three utterances are elaborated into whole different suttas: thus have I heard, at one time the Buddha was staying at Sravastī, etc. etc. On that occasion the Buddha addressed the monks saying O monks get rid of greed. The monks, hearing the words of the Blessed One, were delighted and rejoiced. End of sutta. The next sutta says: thus have I heard, at one time the Buddha was staying at Sravastī. On that occasion he called to the monks saying O monks get rid of hatred, and so on to end of sutta. Then in the same way a third sutta. You get this process of elaborating and spinning out all the time. The Pali tradition, so to speak, did not lend itself to conciseness. So where teachings are very concise and condensed, especially in little verses and short prose passages, you can usually be sure that they are relatively early, in that form, as in the Udāna and to a lesser extent the Sutta Nipāta. They're much shorter and more concentrated. But when it's really spun out at great length you can take it that it's at least a later redaction. Maybe the actual content goes back to the Buddha, but surely the Buddha would not have taught in that particular form. It is often - as far as reading goes - very dry and

uninteresting. It may be very good for recitation but not just for reading.

Alan: Would the repetitiveness also be an aid towards memorization as it wasn't written down?

S: It could be. One would have to try it and see. But with all these elaborations and different permutations you move forward very slowly. Perhaps that has its own value. Anyway, let's go into this a little bit. In a way it's a familiar situation isn't it? Especially for those perhaps who recently attended this festival of mind, body, and spirit. Well, there you've got all these samanas and brahmanas! Of course THEY haven't got the courage to criticize one another. In a way that's even worse, because when the different samanas and brahmanas, the different wandering teachers, criticize and [29] dispraise one another's teachings, well what sort of effect does that have upon you?

Clive: You begin to doubt.

S: You begin to doubt. Because they can't all be right, presumably, and they could possibly all be wrong. But suppose they were all to be saying that they actually taught the same things. Suppose they were to go on teaching what they normally do teach, but suppose they were to assure you that although it appeared to be different they were all really basically teaching the same thing. What sort of effect would that have upon you? Well, it would make you more confused than ever! (laughter) So that's a more difficult situation to deal with. That's the sort of situation that you've got more at such functions as the festival of mind, body, and spirit.

In a sense, of course, they ARE all teaching the same thing. Their teachings are all very different, even opposite, but if you look into them closely they're based on the same, well, micchaditthis, as we would say, the same false views in many cases. But whether that is so or not you've got the same basic situation. You've got you as the ordinary member of the public confronted by what seems to you to be this enormous variety of apparently conflicting teachings all presenting themselves to you, all appealing to you, all claiming your attention, even your allegiance, all offering you something. Some of them offering enlightenment, some of them offering other things, maybe lesser things, but all offering something, all holding out something to you. So what is your reaction on such an occasion?

Subhuti: What criteria can you use?

S: Yes, what criteria? So this is clearly what had happened in the case of these Kalamas of Kesaputta. Not only the Buddha but many other teachers, samanas, and brahmanas had come wandering there with a particular teaching. They all had their different teachings, and not only had they all had their different teachings but they all criticized and attacked and plucked the feathers out of the teachings of all the others. So this left the Kalamas of Kesaputta really bewildered. I think they wouldn't have been bewildered if they'd lived in modern India. Modern India, modern Hinduism, has sorted this out to its satisfaction. That they're all true! However contradictory, however much they differ from one another, they're all true! So the average householder now will not usually be upset in this sort of way. He'll very happily listen to a discourse by some great swamiji who's believed to be enlightened, that there's only one ultimate impersonal reality and that all the gods and incarnations are all (maya) and he'll applaud this or appreciate it and the next day he can be happily listening to another discourse saying that the impersonal absolute brahman is a delusion and that the personal Krsna is the

only reality, and say, oh yes it's all the same thing! (laughter) And he might even happily listen to some rationalist attacking religion and say, oh yes that's true too! (laughter) And he sits unperturbed through it all. This is the state of mind on the whole of the modern Hindu, but of course modern Hinduism, or in a sense Hinduism at all, had not developed in the Buddha's time. People were simpler and in a way straighter, more open-minded, less sophisticated.

So when these different teachers taught different things and even attacked one another, these simple-minded folk of Kesaputta, [30] thinking that there must be one truth and that two contradictory or a number of contradictory teachings couldn't all be true, just became perplexed and confused and they said, "venerable sir, there is doubt, there is uncertainty, in us concerning them. 'Which of these reverend monks and brahmins spoke the truth and which falsehood?'"

So, doubt and uncertainty. Doubt is kankha and uncertainty is vicikiccha. Kankha is just doubt, when you're not sure if something is true or not, but vicikiccha is a bit different. Yes. It's more like uncertainty. (pause) Yes, it's not only to be uncertain, it's to hesitate. It's vi plus cikicchati, which according to the dictionary is to reflect, to be distracted in thought. It's when the introduction of one thing or one tract or one element distracts you from another. In this way uncertainty is created and you hesitate which to follow. So if you are in doubt uncertainty follows. So kankha stands for doubt. Vicikiccha is not only doubt but also the uncertainty in practical terms that doubt brings.

If you are certain about something, if you don't have any doubt about it, you act in accordance with that conviction, but suppose you are doubtful, you are not sure, you don't have a conviction, you're uncertain, well, you hesitate, your whole behaviour becomes uncertain. So vicikiccha is not only doubt, which is a more intellectual thing, it represents the intellectual factor influencing the volitional, because you're not sure, you can't act, and vicikiccha is one of the five hindrances, one of the five nivaranas, you may remember, and these five nivaranas have to be overcome, that is to say they have to be suppressed, temporarily suspended, before you can enter on to the first dhyana. So it's vicikiccha - uncertainty - mainly with regard to the meditation itself. If you're not convinced, if you're not certain, if you're not sure that such a thing as meditation is possible, if you're not convinced it's possible to get into a higher state of consciousness, well, there will be doubt, there will be uncertainty, and that will prevent you from getting into that higher state of consciousness.

So these teachings of these different samanas and brahmanas were presumably not just theoretical, they presumably had some practical consequence, but if there is doubt with regard to the theoretical teachings there will be uncertainty with regard to the practical teachings and you will not know what to follow, you will not know what to do.

So you need theoretical confidence, or understanding even, and practical certainty. So the clearing up of doubts is important so as to create certainty, because without that certainty there is no firm sure directed line of action. So presumably the Kalamas of Kesaputta found themselves in a quite uncomfortable state. The visits of the samanas and brahmanas had created so many doubts in their minds, perhaps created doubts in their minds about all religious or spiritual teachings or philosophical teachings, and therefore they were not sure what to do, they were not sure what to follow, what sort of lives to lead. They were in a state of complete uncertainty. So this is very much I think the state, the condition, of people today

confronted by all sorts of rival teachings, especially in a place like London. Do you think people actually feel this very strongly? I suspect a lot don't but some do presumably. Do you come up against this or do you come across this? Can you say something about it?

Manjuvajra: People sometimes get quite despairing. They just [31] say, well, there's so many different things that seem to suggest opposites, how can I believe anybody?

Subhuti: The major effect is to produce a sort of cynicism and dismiss the lot.

S: Well, the churches are said to be very concerned about the ecumenical movement because - it is said often here, this criticism - that the Christian churches disagree among themselves. Not only disagree but are actually divided, and all claim to be the teaching of Christ or to be the true church, and the churches are saying nowadays that this does mean that a lot of people lose their faith in Christianity and therefore the churches ought to become closer. But unfortunately what usually seems to happen is they're only concerned with a sort of political group type ganging up together. None of them really want to give up their distinctive point of view or their distinctive claim but to present a sort of common front, so that the impression on the outside world is one of sort of unity, or at least of uniformity, so that the scandal of differences as they call it is no longer there.

Subhuti: They search for complex formulas which reconcile without eradicating difference.

S: Right, yes, just a formula will not really solve much but which sort of obscures differences in a vague and ambiguous form of words that everybody can assent to and give their own meaning to. So differences are just papered over. You do come across this? Because I don't, for obvious reasons. It's quite interesting to hear that you do.

Subhuti: I would say that was one of the major attitudes to religion in general in this country today.

\_\_\_: The cynicism.

Subhuti: Well, yes, and people's confrontation with a wide range of different religious views and therefore a cynical sort of holding back and dismissing the whole thing, because religion traditionally claims to certainty.

S: And absoluteness, sanctity based on absoluteness.

Surata: This is where the value of something like our yoga classes really comes in because I've got a couple of people in my class in Brighton who've said this - all this religion's just a load of rubbish but at least with yoga I can get on with something practical. So at least there you've got a chance to sort of get to them on a sort of basic friendly emotional level.

S: But nonetheless do we not find quite a lot of people actually joining all these different mutually exclusive one-sided teachings? Do we not find that even the most extreme of the Christian sects are growing in numbers? In fact the more extreme the more it seems they're growing. So isn't this an even stronger tendency wouldn't you say?

Alan: The more extreme ones tend to be more dictatorial so people join because they want to

be told what to do, they want the decision-making taken away from them.[32]

S: Yes, so doesn't one find this an even stronger tendency?

Subhuti: It's just that you don't come across those people so much because they've already expressed their allegiance.

S: So on the one hand you find uncertainty, on the other hand you find pseudo-certainty.

Nagabodhi: I would have said the opposite to the people who cynically hold back to the people who wholeheartedly embrace the contrariness and again, thinking of Rajneesh, actually make a virtue of it, and he makes a virtue of the fact that he contradicts himself. His followers make a virtue of the fact that he teaches from all traditions and that in one lecture he'll say one thing and in another lecture he'll say the opposite and they think he's great.

S: Well, he's a sort of one man festival of mind, body,... (laughter)

Nagabodhi: Well, his ashram is. People do actually ... I encounter people who don't particularly feel drawn to Buddhism, or at least certainly to the way we present Buddhism, because it does seem to be so definite and clear. They actually see that as a danger: "Why aren't you open to all these other things?"

Manjuvajra: I'm not so sure that ... I don't feel that a lot of people do get involved in what some call the dictatorial approach to things. I think it's much more the groups like Rajneesh that are appealing because they don't actually impress on anybody the urgency of actually making a decision about something.

S: But this is, so to speak, true I think only within the sort of, well, let's say oriental religions, oriental mysticisms, area. There are quite a lot of people I think in this country, and I think probably in the States too and elsewhere in Europe, who never get around to anything oriental, who stay within strictly Christian frames of reference and who are looking for a church to belong to, to join, or that particular church goes looking for them, and who do join the Mormons, the Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Moonies; all these sorts of people seem to be growing far far more rapidly than we are. Scientologists. The more extreme, the more dictatorial, the more tightly organized, the more quickly they seem to grow.

I think this is something that we should take note of. I personally don't see it as anything to do with the spiritual life at all, perhaps, perhaps. Not at all. I see it as entirely a sort of search for group identity, and if people succeed in finding that group identity, well, they'll believe anything you tell them to believe. They don't care what they believe. At the same time they do believe it! Do you see what I mean? It isn't a sort of conscious process. They don't say, for instance, well, for the sake of the warmth and fellowship of the group I agree to subscribe to so-and-so even though I don't actually believe it. No. They actually do come to believe those things or at least to use that language, and for most people to use a certain language is to believe what that language says. But they do it basically I think for a sort of feeling of a group belonging and group certainty which they [33] don't get in any other way. So we're not really concerned with anything spiritual. But on the other hand we are concerned with a very strong, very powerful group movement and tendency which uses at least religious language to some

extent, and we are in the minds of the public, perhaps to some extent, associated with that sort of tendency, even though actually we're something quite different, just as the Buddha was seen as just another samana, even though his whole approach was quite different from those of other samanas of his time; that's how he appeared to his contemporaries, just a particularly successful samana with a particularly large following. None of the others, apart from Mahavira, survived. None of the other followings survived. Only the Buddha and his followers. Only Buddhism became what we call a world religion or universal religion. The others all died out within a few generations, perhaps within a few years.

But I think we have to be clear, in relation to many of these other groups, that regardless of their terminology we and they are not trying to do the same thing. We may even share a certain amount of terminology with some of them but actually we're not trying to do the same thing at all. We're trying to do something quite different in most cases.

There may be the odd group here or the odd group there perhaps, a small one, or the odd individual here or the odd individual there, that does approximate in some respects to our approach, but not any of these larger smaller groups, let us say, or larger smaller sects, or larger smaller Christian churches. Certainly not the big Christian churches of course, don't misunderstand me. You see what I mean?

So in a way we must expect that some of them will gather 'members', in inverted commas, more quickly than we do and will be 'bigger' - inverted commas - than we are. We're trying to do something quite different. On the other hand we mustn't sort of make a merit of our smallness, in the sense of making a merit of our lack of 'success' - again inverted commas. We want to be as big as possible, there's no doubt about that, but we want to be the real thing. We want a big spiritual movement, not a big group.

Manjuvajra: That means we can't use the methods that they use to grow.

S: We can't. If they, for instance, appeal to guilt, and if they appeal to fear, as some of them do, those are methods which are not open to us to appeal to.

Manjuvajra: How about the positive group? Using the positive group as a method of attracting people.

S: I think most people are incapable of being attracted by anything else, if they're even capable of being attracted by that. I think if you are attracted by a positive group, you are already a pretty positive sort of person, and if as a positive person you are attracted by what seems to be a positive group and if you discover that what makes that group positive is something belonging to a sphere beyond that of the group then I think if you are a positive person you too will start developing some interest in that other factor and start thinking in terms of being an individual rather than just a positive group member.

Manjuvajra: So in a way to appeal to a larger circle of people we've [34] got to use some of the same. We're going to appear like some of these other groups.

S: Well, you appear as a group anyway. To someone who is not an individual and doesn't think in terms of individuality how can the FWBO appear as anything but a group? It's impossible. So they'll have to be attracted to you first of all as a group, a positive group, and

then find out in most cases that you're rather more than that. A few people will have a genuinely spiritual aspiration as individuals first, and feel something of that in the FWBO. They will not see it just as a positive group. Of course that is best, but perhaps the majority will be drawn to it as healthy individuals attracted by a positive group and then discover that there's more to it than that and be quite happy that there is.

Manjuvajra: Those people that are in a way repulsed by groups (?) was quite a movement of individualists, how would you see them being ... what would be the effect of the Friends? I'm thinking of the Friends actually projecting itself as a positive group. What would be the effect on those people coming in contact with the Friends and with the Dharma.

S: Well, they probably won't come into contact with it. They don't like groups and they keep clear of groups altogether and make a virtue of it; they won't come into contact with it at all. They'd have no reason to, would they?

Manjuvajra: Do we ignore those people? Because they make up I would say probably quite a large proportion of the population.

S: No. What you're really asking is how are you going to get in touch with people who don't want anyone to get in touch with them. (laughter) Well how? You have to sneak up on them! (laughter) I have a friend who comes to see me sometimes and she makes a great virtue of this. She's very interested in spiritual things. She's interested in Buddhism, she's interested in Hinduism etc, etc, but she always ends up by telling me, 'Well, of course, I don't have anything to do with any group,' group being a really sort of dirty word in her vocabulary. And by group she means any sort of what we would call spiritual fellowship even. But more recently I've been beginning to put it to her, well, why she is so unfavourably disposed towards groups or spiritual communities? So I've given her some food for thought now, but I think people of this sort have got a serious problem. I'm not quite sure what it is; among other things it's really a sort of false self sufficiency. I think also a lot of it is bound up with fear of rejection, that they're afraid of being rejected by a group. They don't take the risk of asking to join in case their application is refused. She used to say, "I'm not a joiner." You hear this phrase, don't you? I'm not a joiner. Well, why not. Usually you're afraid of being rejected, so you play safe and you have a sort of carping critical attitude towards people who are joiners and who do enjoy groups, and you flatter yourself that you're sort of somehow spiritually superior. You're not dependent on a group; you can go it alone. But the result is you just stay in a little rut, a pseudo-spiritual rut. You're a sort of mini-pratyekabuddha, which means you're not a Buddha at all of any sort, you're just pratyeka. This is what it really means.[35]

Alan: Fear of change, fear of themselves changing, could be one of the reasons for remaining aloof. If you actually criticize it gives your ego a great sense of substance.

S: But I think people like that, if you do happen to meet them, do have to be directly confronted and challenged. They shouldn't be allowed to get away with it, they shouldn't be allowed to get away with their pseudo-spiritual superiority.

Clive: Joining a spiritual community or joining an order, that's not "joining" in the sense of joining even a positive group...

S: No.

Clive: ...It's an expression of commitment, to a common ideal. Although you can see it in sub-individual terms as joining a group and I suppose there might be a reaction to that.

S: I think what some of these people can't even see is that it's not a bad thing to belong to a positive group. To belong to a spiritual community - if you can use the expression "belong" - is even better, but there's nothing wrong with belonging to a positive group and you don't necessarily show yourself to be superior by holding aloof even from the positive group. I think someone who is genuinely an individual would quite happily participate, at least to some extent, in the positive group if no spiritual community was available. If a spiritual community is available, well, so much the better. But many people who say that they're not joiners - in the sense of not joiners of spiritual movements - just can't make that distinction between the group and the spiritual community or between the positive group and the spiritual community. This sort of distinction is not normally made. We're quite familiar with it within the Friends but normally it is not made at all. People have got no conception of how the spiritual community differs from the group because they've no conception of the individual.

If such people were really individuals as distinct from individualists - which is rather different - they would also be able to understand what was meant by the spiritual community.

Clive: They could see the distinction.

S: If they themselves were individuals, yes, they'd be able to see the distinction between the group and the spiritual community. So their claim to be individuals is invalidated by the very fact that they reject the spiritual community. I put it to this friend of mine in this way: well, if you really are an individual, well, you should be happy to meet another individual. If the two of you are individuals you should be happy to meet a third individual. That's your spiritual community. That's what it basically is. It's not only building or structure or organization, it's individuals in the true sense of getting together and enhancing their sense of individuality through their mutual interaction. Though I think the majority of those who claim not to be joiners, where spiritual things are concerned, are people who as I said were afraid of being rejected and also people who don't want to be open. They're afraid of the openness that life as part of a spiritual community would involve. They don't want to be known, they don't want to open themselves up. Anyway, have we to some extent got into the minds of the [36] Kalamas of Kesaputta?

Subhuti: It's just quite interesting that they're represented as sort of asking the question as a group.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: Do you place any significance on that rather than...?

S: Not necessarily. One could say that, yes, groups tend to act as groups. Maybe they wanted a sort of collective guidance. But of course one has to make allowance for Indian custom and tradition. Very often it's the oldest people present who speak on behalf of everybody else. It isn't polite for younger people to raise their voices when elders are present, and it may be that a sort of spokesman voices what everybody is thinking, and they may be thinking it as individuals also, not just as members of the group.

Clearly there must have been some discussion among the Kalamas before the Buddha came around. They must have talked about this confusing state of affairs. So maybe when they got together with the Buddha it was everybody's individual doubt and uncertainty that was being expressed. In a sense you couldn't really have a collective doubt and uncertainty unless it was with regard to purely group norms, and of course one of the effects of having all these wandering teachers is that group norms are upset. This is what happened of course in ancient Greece with the Sophists. So when group norms begin to be upset then there is the possibility of the emergence of individuality. Because when you can't go by them, well, what can you go by? You have to think out something for yourself.

\_\_\_: Doesn't that indicate that these people weren't individuals? Otherwise they would have gone into these problems and some of them anyway would have sorted things out for themselves, whereas they don't seem to have been able to have done that.

S: I think it's very difficult to sort out these things for oneself. I think it's only the exceptional person that can do that.

So it seems as though they were in a state of doubt and confusion. Perhaps their traditional norms had been upset. They had the potentiality, the possibility, of being individuals but they hadn't yet achieved individuality. So they were looking to the Buddha for some help in that sort of situation. That is the situation that many people find themselves in today in the modern West, isn't it? The traditional group norms, norms regarding modes of behaviour, ways of life, had been disturbed and upset, but there's no universally agreed norm to take its place. So people are thrown back on their own resources. So sometimes they immediately abandon the prospect of thinking things out for themselves or coming to a decision as an individual or being an individual. They surrender that freedom into the hands of some dictatorial group. They just give up. Others just stay on their own and continue thinking and searching. Perhaps they find the solution, perhaps they don't. Perhaps they take refuge in cynicism or opportunism or one or another form of escapism. They just don't think about it any more.

So it's as though the Kalamas represent a group of people whose traditional certainties have been shaken by being exposed to all this conflict of opinion among individual teachers but [37] who've not yet been able to arrive at any certainty of their own individually. So the Buddha comes at a very crucial moment, as it were, for them and it seems that they've already developed a certain amount of faith and trust in the Buddha. They are perhaps convinced that he if anyone will be able to show them a way out to restore their certainty.

[end of tape 2, start of tape 3]

Manjuvajra: ... live in Kesaputta.

S: As far as I remember they were the predominant tribe in that particular area.

[next session]

S: This is the central section of the whole discourse. We may get through it this afternoon; we may not. Let's see. There's quite a lot to be discussed here. So would someone like to read it straight through? Just [section] four.

Clive: "The criterion [sic] for rejection. It is proper for you, Kalamas, to doubt, to be uncertain; uncertainty has arisen in you about what is doubtful. Come, Kalamas. Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumour; nor upon what is in the scripture; nor upon a surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration, 'The monk is our teacher.' Kalamas, when you yourselves know: 'These things are bad; these things are venerable; these things are censured by the wise; undertaken are observed, these things to lead to harm and ill,' abandon them."

S: So first of all the Buddha says, "It is proper for you, Kalamas, to doubt, to be uncertain. Uncertainty has arisen in you about what is doubtful." The text is very emphatic. It says "alam hi vo Kalama". Alam means something like it's proper, suitable, natural. And it's emphatic and indeclinable, which means that it's a very weighty word, there's a lot of emphasis on it, especially coming at the beginning of the sentence like that. We can't quite reproduce it in English, but the Buddha is saying something like it is indeed proper or it is definitely proper or definitely natural for you to doubt, to be uncertain. Uncertainty has arisen in you about what is doubtful. Well, if something is doubtful it's not surprising that you should be uncertain. What do you notice about the Buddha's comment here?

Abhaya: The uncertainty. There's something perhaps sort of positive about it. It's a definite experience and not to be underplayed.

S: Right. It's as though he's saying, well, accept the fact that you are in doubt, that you are uncertain, or that you are uncertain because you are experiencing doubt with regard to, in fact, things which are doubtful. So he says "It is proper for you, Kalamas, to doubt, to be uncertain; uncertainty has arisen in you about what [38] is doubtful." It's as though he's saying it's not surprising that you should be in doubt when confronted by all these conflicting opinions of different samanas and brahmanas.

So in a way you have to start by accepting your condition of doubt and uncertainty, but that is not the end of the matter. He then says "Come, Kalamas. Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing etc., etc." There are ten of these criteria for rejection and we're going to go through them one by one quite carefully and they will require quite a bit of investigation and understanding and we'll need to refer to the original Pali words in each case.

So the Buddha says not by repeated hearing - ma anussavena - do not go by repeated hearing. So what does that mean?

\_\_\_: Just because somebody says something a lot of times it doesn't make it true.

S: Yes...

Nagabodhi: Just because a lot of other people seem to believe...

Manjuvajra: Or just because you've heard it so many times you become conditioned.

S: Right, yes, you start taking it for granted that it must be so. It gradually infiltrates your mind. As somebody was saying yesterday evening in the course of the symposium, Mother's Pride is good for you! (laughter) You've heard it so often that you begin to believe it.

Nagabodhi: I think - with God and theistic notions of religion and spirituality - a lot of people who want to break out from Christianity head off to something like the festival of mind and body but most of the groups don't offer anything different because fundamentally most Westerners don't seem to be able to conceive of anything that doesn't contain God. It's all actually still got God in it.

S: Yes. So it's as though if you hear certain ideas repeated again and again and again you get used to those ideas, you become accustomed to thinking and speaking in terms of those ideas, you learn that particular language; and because you learn that particular language or you use that particular language yourself, your thoughts are influenced at least to some extent. So it suggests that we must be very careful and very suspicious about those things which we hear repeatedly asserted, because insensibly if we're not careful we do come to think in that sort of way. It's as though the opinions of the group are pouring in on us from all sides all the time and we have to make a conscious effort NOT to think in those ways.

It's very difficult in fact not to speak, not to think, as other people think. It's very difficult not to speak as other people speak. If you refuse to speak their language, well, what language will you use? If you use your language it will be very difficult to communicate to them what you are thinking. If you use their language of course it will be impossible for you to communicate to them what you are thinking. So we have to wake up to the fact that we do go by - to a very great extent - what has been acquired, in the language of Nyanaponika's [sic] translation, by repeated hearing. There are attitudes and viewpoints which have been drummed [39] and drilled into us by virtue of repeated hearing. We hear them on the radio, see them on television, read them in the newspapers, are told them by our friends or they're assumed in the course of our contacts with our friends within the group and our discussions with our friends within the group.

So therefore, the Buddha says, not by repeated hearing. Repeated hearing: the fact that you've heard something a number of times, the fact that you've become accustomed to the idea, think in those terms, speak in those terms, are not any criterion. That is not any criterion. So this points to the fact that usually we just passively accept our opinions, our ideas, our philosophy if you can call it that, our religion, from the particular group within which we happen to have been born. As someone has pointed out, is it not incredible that the vast majority of people born in a Christian country should be Christians, the vast majority of people born in a Muslim country should be Muslims, or the vast majority of people born in a Buddhist country should be Buddhists? So what does all this suggest to one? That you're sort of passively taking your opinions from your surroundings. So even where they are perhaps the right opinions you're not accepting them for the right reasons, you're not making them your own, you haven't made them your own. You just accepted them because they're current, they're the opinions of the group. You've come to acquire them by virtue of repeatedly hearing them.

Within the Friends we sometimes encounter this. We hear people using the characteristic Friends language, but you can always tell whether they're using it to communicate something that they themselves have thought, conclusions to which they themselves have come, experiences which they themselves have had, or whether they've just picked up the patter, so to speak, of the Friends group, as they see it or experience it. Have you ever noticed this?

So perhaps you can't expect people to be able to speak all at once from their own experience. Maybe they have to get used to the language and then maybe bring their experience into line

with their language, but nonetheless one has to keep a quite careful watch on this sort of thing and make sure that people aren't just continuing to use the language without really appreciating what the language is all about.

Some time ago someone told me - this is quite a long time ago - that he'd come to the conclusion that to have a relationship would be good for his individual development. Well, he was using the language all right, but you could say he was rather misusing it. It's as though he has come to understand that within the FWBO if you express things in terms of your individual development, well, that would always make it all right. But clearly to use the right language isn't nearly enough; it means really realizing that most of the thoughts we think are not our own thoughts, they are simply thoughts received from outside to which we have become accustomed. It's quite a reflection, in a way, that in the course of your life so far you have probably, or perhaps let me say never, had an original thought. It's not easy to have an original thought. Something that you genuinely thought out for yourself.

Vajradaka: I find that really quite worrying; [it's] something that I think about quite a lot.

S: It is not that ALL one's thoughts have to be original thoughts, but at least you should make the thoughts that you receive your own [40] by genuinely apprehending them, by experiencing them, by acting upon them. So in this particular context we tend to think that something is true, at least we accept it for all practical purposes as true, simply because we've heard it so many times that we've become accustomed to it and we take it for granted as we say. We take the truth of it for granted.

So you can't really base yourself upon the truth of something that is regarded by you as true simply on the strength of your having repeatedly heard it proclaimed, or perhaps not even proclaimed but taken for granted or assumed. One finds as a Buddhist that this is what people are always doing with regards to God - they assume, they take it for granted, that if you have anything to do with religion then you must be concerned with God. They don't allow you to be concerned with religion and at the same time not be concerned with God. So it's not that within Buddhism, say, hearing is not important. Yes, you have hearing, reflection, and experiencing through meditation; you have these three stages. But here what the Buddha has in mind is just hearing a thing and hearing it again and hearing it again and hearing it so many times so often, getting so used to it, that you come without perhaps realizing it to accept it as true. Instead of which when you hear something you should reflect upon it, put it into practice, see how it works, not just go on hearing it and hearing it and hearing it and insensibly coming to accept it.

Abhaya: I think it comes down to what you were saying last night about being passive. Because you've been conditioned to be so passive in whatever religion you've been brought up in, you come into the Friends and the same thing happens really. You hear all the teachings, you become saturated in them in a way, that you haven't really reflected on them. Sometimes I do get that feeling with people who know the language very well but...

S: Yes, so reflection is a more active stage. There has to be the receptive stage first. I won't say that hearing is passive. Genuine hearing, certainly in the Buddhist context, is not a passive thing; it is a receptive thing. I make a distinction between passivity and receptivity. So certainly you begin by learning, certainly you begin by hearing and you take in. You shouldn't be asking questions prematurely and challenging points of view before you've really

understood them. You should be receptive to begin with, but then you've got to start thinking them over, and that's when your own independent directed thinking comes into play, when you start assimilating, understanding, chewing over, asking questions in order to clarify. That's appropriate then, when you know enough to be able to ask a question. Very often one can see sometimes within the context of question-and-answer meetings that people's questions are prompted by sheer ignorance. Well, maybe worse than that: by confusion. You need to know a lot before you can ask an intelligent question, certainly about something like Buddhism. You need to have thought over what you've read, what you've heard.

So first is the stage of genuinely receptive hearing, and then the stage of what we might call creative thinking about what you have heard, and then perhaps the realization of the truth of what you've heard and what you've understood for yourself.

We are very dependent for our knowledge and understanding [41] of so many things upon sources outside ourselves that we've no means of checking. If you think in terms of the news, what is going on in different countries, you read certain accounts which no doubt purport to be objective, but I think one can seriously doubt whether they are as objective as they purport to be. The mere fact that something ranks as news or doesn't rank as news itself means that a process of selection has in fact been exercised, almost a process of censorship. Some things are considered newsworthy, others not, which means that you are allowed to hear about certain things but you are not allowed to hear about certain other things. You are allowed to hear about those things which certain other people consider important.

Is it really important that you should know all the details of the facts leading up to Mr and Mrs so-and-so having a divorce? Is it really necessary? But you can have the facts and the details filling a whole page of a newspaper whereas some other matter of great economic importance or perhaps cultural importance or human importance receives a very brief mention indeed. And some other things you just get no information given you at all about them. But if you read the same newspapers day after day, week after week, year after year, you cannot but start seeing things in the terms in which they are presented by that particular newspaper.

Nagabodhi: I've noticed this with Time Out, the magazine. They've got a very definite view and a very definite rhetoric. The articles and reviews all seem to be written by the same machine, and when they started a letters page even the letters had exactly the same rhetoric and feel and vision. It's quite extraordinary.

S: I'm sure they at least rewrite letters, which I think some magazines and papers do.

Nagabodhi: Perhaps they do that but I wouldn't be surprised if the readers have just completely identified with that slightly glib cynical way of putting things.

S: I remember thinking and feeling this in relation to Time magazine, which I read for a few years, that it saw things in a definite, quite angled way, and I remember the editor had a letter addressed to the readers each week and his letter always began 'Dear Time Reader', as though a Time reader was a special kind of person. Well yes, you could say, yes, a Time reader meaning a regular reader of Time is a special kind of person because he's been conditioned in a particular way by virtue of the fact that he read Time magazine for so many years or decades even. His vision is slanted in a particular way.

So again you begin to believe something to be true. It need not be just a statement, it can be a whole point of view, a whole approach. Just because you've heard it so many times, you've been saturated in it to such an extent, you take it on without realizing that this is what you are in fact doing. So that's all right perhaps if you deliberately expose yourself to a certain kind of influence knowingly, because that is what you want to do. For instance, if you knowingly expose yourself to the influence of Shakespeare and read as much of and about Shakespeare as you can and go and see his plays, well, fair enough, you do that quite consciously and deliberately because you want to be influenced by Shakespeare, but it isn't quite like [42] that in the case of your opening your newspaper or turning on the news. You expect information, you expect facts, you do not expect to have a particular point of view drummed and instilled into you, but this is actually what is happening all the time. Even the way in which news is presented, that certain things are headlined or that the same bland tone of voice is used by announcers on the radio whether it's an increase in the cost of living, a pit disaster, or some jokey little item about some well-known public figure. It's the same bland tone of voice. The same rather, what shall I say, offhand sort of treatment sometimes. All this is conveying a message. When the tone is even, bland, regardless of them, it's sort of conveying the impression it's all equally important or equally unimportant. It's all just grist to the newsreader's mill; that's really all it is.

Vajradaka: When I was in America I got the impression that the media was America's mind. It encompassed the whole of America and everyone was tuned into it and it did everyone's thinking, for everyone.

S: Well I sometimes quote that saying of Cardinal Manning, alleged: 'I don't think, the Pope does my thinking for me.' But it's not only the Catholics. It's: I don't think, my morning newspaper does my thinking for me; I don't think, Malcolm Muggeridge does my thinking for me; I don't think, Mrs Mary Whitehouse does my thinking for me; or whoever else it may be.

Nagabodhi: It's ironic because there might be a few people who say 'I don't think' because there's some specific person who thinks for them who actually does think. My memory of working on programmes like Nationwide and Twenty-Four Hours was that actually the people who produced the programmes: all they knew was the language, they didn't think. It's a totally self-perpetuating process.

S: One could say that a conscientious pope does at least think. He may be within a certain limited sphere and from certain quite definite and quite strict assumptions, but he does think. But as you say very often in the media it's not a case even of thinking, and it's a really terrifying thought that there are so many people who are known for purveying this non-thinking. If you listen on the radio to any sort of discussion programme, there are certain limits, there are certain commonly held assumptions, regardless of who you've got on the programme, whether it's a Conservative MP or a Labour MP, or even - I was going to say a Communist MP but there aren't any communist MPs - whoever you've got there are certain assumptions that they share and that you are expected to share and the entire discussion takes place within the area of those assumptions.

One of the biggest of the assumptions is, 'it doesn't matter, don't take us seriously, we're only talking.' That seems to be very often one of the biggest of the assumptions. Don't take us seriously, don't get upset, no one should get offended, no one should get angry, because after all we're only talking. We're talking because we're paid for it on this programme. We're just

fulfilling our role of people who are well known for being well known. Don't spoil the show by taking things seriously and having a real genuine disagreement or a real [43] showdown on the air in front of all these nice people and this nice man chairing the programme. How awful that would be if people started thinking that we took seriously the things that we are saying and were prepared to actually disagree with other people and get heated and get vehement. If there's any sign of that happening, well, they cool it down at once. They don't like that sort of thing and I'm sure there's a little man ready with his finger on the switch to take it all off the air if necessary if someone says a rude word or anything of that sort. It can all be faded out very quickly and a soothing gramophone record played instead. (laughter) But isn't it so?

Nagabodhi: It's interesting, that, because that's what happens on the television.

S: I've not watched television but if it's anything like radio...

Nagabodhi: It is, it's the same but actually they don't press the button, in fact they do try to provoke things like that, but it just never happens. I remember working on a programme where it was obvious they were trying to get an argument and because it wouldn't happen the director who pressed the buttons started pressing them very fast going from one face to another to try to create an illusion of argument. (laughter)

S: But I doubt whether they wanted a real argument. I think they would want people just getting heated and angry and appearing to disagree but in the end agreeing that actually perhaps they had more in common than they thought etc., etc etc.

Nagabodhi: It's quite interesting. In France a couple of years ago I watched a few chat programmes and they really did have arguments and people would go scarlet with rage...

S: It must have been colour television!

Nagabodhi: It was, yes, but they seemed to really go for that. Very ordinary unsophisticated rowing. (laughter)

S: That's the other extreme.

Nagabodhi: Oh yes! It was definitely no more valid but really refreshing!

S: But anyway have we got that point that the Buddha is making to the Kalamas? (laughter) Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing. The Pali is much more succinct: *ma anussavena* - not by what has been repeatedly heard, or not by the repeatedly heard. In other words do not go by that. But you can begin to see, begin to feel, from our discussion so far, to what extent we do go by simply what is heard, over and over again.

Nagabodhi: Can I just follow something you said as a bit of an aside about Shakespeare? Choosing consciously to immerse yourself in a conditioning process. A lot of people do raise objections to the idea of communities and the sort of things that we do as being... they say, well, all you're doing is just conditioning yourself in another way.

S: The term that they use is brainwashing. I've dealt with this in exhaustive detail I hope in the last women's study retreat, so [44] I don't really feel like going over the same ground now.

[This is probably a reference to the seminar on The Jewel Ornament of Liberation, chapter 14: The Perfection of Patience, tr.] But it's all there, and I touched upon it on earlier occasions too. But again you see people's assumptions seem to be that all the OTHER people are doing the brainwashing, are being brainwashed, but THEY are not brainwashed; that by living in a spiritual community, a Buddhist community, oh you're just being brainwashed; that by practising meditation you're just allowing yourself to be brainwashed. But THEY are not brainwashed, oh no; they can watch television for ten or twelve hours a day, well, THEY are not being brainwashed! They read the newspapers several hours a day, well THEY are not brainwashed! Or they belong to the Conservative party - well, they're not brainwashed; they're Marxists, they're not brainwashed. They look at the ads, oh they're not brainwashed. YOU'RE brainwashed, you wretched Buddhist. By living in a community (loud laughter) and meditating you are being brainwashed! They are not! Oh, no. You see?

So if people get at you for conditioning yourself or allowing yourselves to be brainwashed you must not be on the defensive. You must come right back and be on the offensive and say, 'Brainwashing? If we're talking about brainwashing let's have a look at YOUR life.' It's the same with regard to escapism. You do a spot of meditation; you're an escapist! What about them with their cigarettes and their whisky and their promiscuous sex, etc, etc? What are THEY doing?

Subhuti: That's life! (laughter)

S: And of course in the same way: you're being selfish; you sit down to meditate - you're being selfish; you live in a spiritual community, oh you're being selfish. Well, what are THEY doing to help the world? Just look into that. As though they are all models of altruism! Who are they working for? Who are they earning money for? Number one every time! You see? At the same time we have to bear these accusations - or are supposed to bear these accusations - of being brainwashed, being escapists, being selfish. So I think we shouldn't put up with this, we should turn the argument right round the other way and come right back at them quite strongly and quite powerfully. It's quite insupportable that we should have to put up with this and make weak and feeble excuses and apologies for doing a bit of meditation or living in a community etc etc.

Anyway that's all been dealt with in massive detail in the women's study retreat. We expose ourselves to wholesome influences whereas most people expose themselves to unwholesome influences. That's the difference.

Manjuvajra: I've been thinking recently about the scientific method and sort of scientific philosophy and how that's got inherent in it this idea of objectivity, namely that a person can be separate from the world and therefore make judgements about it objectively, and that seems to me to be totally erroneous. I mean it's impossible to do that. Suppose someone wants to make an objective criticism of Buddhism, they feel that they can come along, they can have a look at it, they can make an objective criticism, but they can't, because they can only make a criticism from their own world. In fact it's impossible for anyone to make an objective criticism, it seems to me, about anything. You can only really sort of experience things from within and then just make a choice rather than claiming that something is objectively [45] ... that this is objectively right. You can only say that this is the best and so you make that particular choice. So in terms of conditioning if somebody makes that sort of accusation about Buddhist conditioning we can say, well, yes it is conditioning but it's much better. It's a

better way to be conditioned than any other way.

S: I think one has to be a bit careful of how one uses the word conditioned. I think one has to make it quite clear to begin with that conditioned is not necessarily a dirty word, that to live at all is to be conditioned, that that is unavoidable, that you are a conditioned being but that if the conditions on which your being depends are positive conditions, well, you will develop into or as a healthy and positive being. But you can't sort of separate and isolate yourself from all conditions and be someone or something unconditioned; you hope that through your positive conditioning you can grow into more and more refined conditionings and apparently or hopefully in the end into something which is, humanly speaking, unconditioned, but the way to that is through positive conditioning rather than through negative conditioning, so you need a sort of critique of conditionedness itself, or conditioning itself, to begin with.

Manjuvajra: I feel from this that actually the scientific method itself, I think, is a micchaditthi. I think it's something you might actually have to attack a bit.

S: Well, I look at it in this way as I said last night. Our whole experience is in terms of subject and object. Our total experience is a subject-cum-object experience. We never experience a subject without an object, nor do we experience an object without a subject, so so far as we are concerned any statement of truth, using that word, must contain a reference to an object and must contain a reference to a subject. So therefore there could be no objective scientific truth, if by that you mean statements about an object which exists entirely independently of any subject, and in the same way there cannot be any expression of a feeling which exists entirely independently of any object. So in any given situation, in any given statement, it is a question of the relative degree of emphasis. Science is more objective than poetry. It's as though the line shifts. Poetry is more subjective - let us say for the sake of argument - than science, botany is more objective than history, and so on. But never do you get a science which is completely objective - though some people might say mathematics, higher mathematics. Nor do you get an art, let us say, that is completely subjective.

So it is a question of ascertaining within any given situation which degree of objectivity and which degree of subjectivity is appropriate. But you can never dispense with one and make do only with the other. You yourself are a subject-cum-object for yourself. You are a subject, for another you are an object. Your own body is both subject and object for you. You experience it from within, you experience it from without. So all your experience is a sort of ... I was going to say combination but that isn't quite the right word ... almost an amalgam of subjectivity and objectivity. You can't dispense with either, with either subjectivity or objectivity. So science approximates to objectivity but can never attain it. You could say poetry or music, let us say, approximates to subjectivity but never attains it. There's always a trace of the other, the opposite, whether that be the subject or the object.[46]

S: But in certain situations a greater degree of objectivity is appropriate, or it is appropriate to give a greater weight to the element of objectivity or of subjectivity as the case may be.

Nagabodhi: If you're just being completely self-indulgent, say in communication with somebody, surely you could be entirely subjective. There are times when one is entirely subjective.

S: No, because you're subjective about something. There's an element of reference to the

object.

Nagabodhi: (?)

S: Well, give me a concrete example.

Nagabodhi: Well you might be sort of having an argument with somebody and you are just completely ...

S: But then you're having an argument about something, you're having an argument with somebody. There is the object. It is not completely subjective.

Clive: What about a meditation experience? When you're not even thinking about ... you're really involved in that experience. You're absorbed ...

S: You're asking is that subjective or objective?

Clive: I'm suggesting that it's completely subjective.

S: But why completely subjective? Why not completely objective? (laughter) Take an actual, say, concrete meditation. Supposing you're doing the mindfulness of breathing, well, the breath itself is the object isn't it - or if you're doing the metta bhavana, other living beings are the object - so you've got subject and object. You've got your own mental state, your own mood, your own feeling and the object of that state or the object of that mood. But you're thinking in terms, say, of an even higher experience?

Clive: Yes. Something that's ... I guess it's still an object but it's an experience. It's not the breath or another person, it's an experience. I guess that experience is the object even though ...

S: Well you could say it was the object retrospectively, when you came out of it, because you'd think about it and say, well, I had that experience. You make the experience the object of your thoughts, so in that sense it would be an object, but in a way that isn't the question because the question really relates to the experience itself when you are in it. So in relation to that one can say that, yes, our experience, as I said, is a combination of subject and object or a combination of object and subject. So in every statement that we make, in every thing that we say, there is an objective reference and there is a subjective reference, but that what we may describe as tension between subject and object can be reduced, and we do find that in meditation this is what happens. If you get really deeply so to speak into meditation the tension between the subject and the object tends to be reduced. Subject and object do come together more and [47] more, so that there is a subtle object in relation to a subtle subject, and a point may come when even that subtle distinction disappears and you can't speak of it in terms of an experience of an object or an experience by a subject. And this is one of the arupa dhyanas which is described as neither perception nor non-perception. It's not perception, it can't be described as perception because that would make it just subject and not object. It can't be described as non-perception because that would make it object but not subject. It's neither object nor subject. It is said in Buddhist tradition that there is still a very very subtle object-subject distinction even though it is not actually perceived. And it's only when Nirvana or enlightenment is fully realized that that subject-object distinction loses its validity

completely.

[end of side one]

[side two]

S: ... of course arises in connection with the Bodhisattva because it's said of the Bodhisattva that the Bodhisattva treats others as himself, but it is not that the Bodhisattva makes a deliberate effort. When I say Bodhisattva I mean one who's really a Bodhisattva not just trying to follow the Bodhisattva path. When a Bodhisattva treats others as himself it's not by a sort of effort of will, it's not that he thinks well here am I and there are the other people, I ought to treat them just like I treat myself. No. He doesn't feel - in the way that ordinary people feel - the very distinction between subject and object and therefore between himself and others. In his experience that distinction is transcended. So therefore he's able to treat others in the same way that, so to speak, he treats himself.

So in Buddhist thought, in Buddhist philosophy generally speaking, it is held that the subject-object distinction is not ultimately valid. This is what we usually say, and this is one of the things that becomes increasingly apparent in the course of meditation, especially if any element of insight is involved.

So in terms of our ordinary experience it's as though because the subject-object distinction is not ultimately valid it is possible for the line of demarcation between them to shift all the time, so that at any given moment in your experience either the objective element is predominant or the subjective element is predominant. The extreme of objectivity is what we call the scientific, the extreme of subjectivity is what we call feeling, but however scientific you are there is always - however objective - there's always the perceiving subject. However attenuated, however remote, however alienated, and however pure, however subjective your feeling there is always, however subtle, an object towards which that feeling is oriented. There's always some consciousness of an object.

But as I've said as one goes more deeply into meditation and moves from the mundane to the transcendental, the distinction, the line of demarcation between subject and object, is gradually dissolved.

Anyway, that's all arisen out of "Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing." In other words don't allow yourself to be brainwashed. Don't come to think of something as true just because you've heard it a number of times. And this is what happens to us all the time. It's unavoidable because you're born as a baby and you're educated as a child amongst and by people who already have their ideas. You're not allowed to find out things for yourself or think your own thoughts. It's not [48] practicable anyway. You probably wouldn't survive. So you've got to begin with - you've got to take in - other people's ideas. Heaven help you if they are the wrong ideas, as they very often are. With luck they're reasonably positive or not too many of them are put into you, but as you reach what are called the years of discretion then you have to start questioning everything, even initially rejecting, at least provisionally rejecting, everything, and you have to start thinking things out for yourself.

Abhaya: It would seem like thinking is a faculty rather like touching and hearing and seeing, but it has been completely underdeveloped.

S: Yes. Underdeveloped but overestimated perhaps.

Nagabodhi: What do you mean?

S: Well, underdeveloped because, well, people don't think positively and creatively enough. But overestimated because in Western psychology we tend to put the thinking rational mind above the five physical senses. But in traditional Buddhist psychology it's placed alongside them. The eye is the faculty that deals with sight, with visual forms, the ear is the faculty which deals with sounds. In the same way the mind is the faculty which deals with thoughts. It has no more access to ultimate reality than do the physical senses, whereas in Western psychology we tend to assume that what you think is somehow more real than what you perceive with the physical senses. But that view is not held by Buddhism. So that's why I say our minds, our thinking minds, are underdeveloped but overestimated. I'm going to be going into thinking in a minute.

So "Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing." I'm repeating this so many times that there's a danger that you'll just sort of take it as gospel (laughter) and not bother to think about it. But you are at liberty to disagree, obviously, if you think that you should go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing. After all, think of all the time you've spent listening to it. You might just as well make some use of it perhaps, and agree with it and act upon it. You might think that. Anyway, let's go on to the next of these criteria for rejection.

The next one is translated by Nyanaponika [sic] as "nor upon tradition" which is ma paramparaya. Now what is this parampara? Parampara. The literal translation means in succession, one after the other, or in sequence even. So what does it refer to and how is it translated tradition? It's not quite tradition.

Alan: It brings in the concept of time.

S: It brings in the concept of time.

Nagabodhi: It's again through habit but it's more like the habit of the group.

S: Yes. You could define it as the habit of the group through time. I'll explain that in a minute. (pause) Parampara as I've said means in succession or in sequence, but what is it that succeeds? It refers to the sort of teacher-pupil succession in [49] a sort of organizational way. In India for instance, even today, a sect, or what we would call a sect, is very often referred to as a paramapara, that is to say a sort of succession of teacher and pupil and then that pupil becomes a teacher and has a pupil in turn and in that way truth is handed on. 'Truth' - in inverted commas - is handed on down a whole sort of lineal succession, and you perhaps happen to belong to that particular lineage let us say. So you accept something just because it has come down to you in your particular school of thought. Do you see in what sense Nyanaponika [sic] now translates this as tradition?

So do not go by tradition, in the sense that: do not go by something because it's been handed down by a particular religious group for a long time and has now reached you. Don't accept it, you could say, just because it's part of your religious heritage, as the member of a particular religious group. I was reading a few days ago, prior to reviewing it, the autobiography of a Tibetan monk, [The Life and Teaching of Geshe Rabten, reviewed in FWBO Newsletter no.

47, tr.] and he made the point that attached to his monastic university there were two tantric colleges, and these two tantric colleges, upper and lower, differed in certain, let us say, methods of practice or certain tantras, but if you joined one college you had to follow one particular tradition, if you joined the other you had to follow the other tradition. It wasn't for instance that you decided which tradition you wanted to follow, even which tradition was correct, and then joined the appropriate college. You followed the tradition because it happened to be the tradition of your college. Do you see what I mean? It's the sort of thing you get I believe if you go to public school: different houses have got their different traditions so you automatically follow and you develop a sort of fierce loyalty about that particular tradition and are prepared to stick up for it and fight on its behalf. You identify with it strongly just because you're a member of that particular house. So do you see what not going by parampara really means? It means you've in the first place identified yourself as belonging to a particular religious group with a sort of history and tradition behind it, and you think of the tradition as coming down to you and you as being bound to follow that because you are affiliated to that particular group, that particular tradition. So do you think that this can have a positive aspect at all?

\_\_\_: Yes, the tradition handed down might be the tradition of a positive group which is the basis for later development.

S: Yes, but should you follow it simply because it is the tradition of your group or should you follow it because it is a positive tradition? You should follow it because it's a positive tradition. What the Buddha is getting at is that you cannot take as a criterion simply the fact that something is the tradition of your particular group - the group, the religious group, the religious sect or lineage, to which you happen to be affiliated. Perhaps we could look upon this kind of thing as represented by the expression "your cultural heritage". You get quite a bit of this in a country like, say, Ceylon where Buddhism has been going for a long time and it's been identified very much with Ceylon nationalism, and you're supposed to be a Buddhist and a supporter of Buddhism because that's all part [50] of your great "cultural heritage". It's that which has made Ceylon great, etc., etc. It's involved with this idea of being a born Buddhist. You're a born Buddhist and you accept everything of Buddhism. It's your heritage, it's come down to you. You may not practise it, you may not be really seriously involved with it, but you're prepared to stick up for it, you're prepared to fight for it, even if you don't understand it.

Abhaya: It's really an extension of the one before isn't it?

S: It is, yes, or a more specific form. Right, yes.

Abhaya: So it has even more weight (now).

S: It's what for instance Martin Luther was told on a famous occasion. 'Do you think that you, Martin Luther, just an ordinary monk, are right and that the whole church throughout the centuries could be wrong?' So he refused to go by tradition, the tradition of the church. He insisted on being shown from scripture, which they couldn't do because there were certain practices of the Roman Catholic church which weren't mentioned in the scriptures at all; they knew it quite well. So they weren't willing to meet him on that particular ground.

Subhuti: This is quite often raised particularly by Tibetan groups, isn't it, the question of

lineage. I gather Trungpa lays great stress on the lineage from which he derives and there's a Manchester group which said more or less that we were in no position to teach because we have no lineage. Tibetans.

S: So it raises the whole question of really what does one mean by lineage in this context, because one has got the Buddha's clear view, the Buddha's clear opinion, and even in the Diamond Sutra there is a passage where the Buddha says that the Tathagata does not - I'm not sure whether it says teach or believe - but anyway the Tathagata does not transmit anything. This whole idea of lineage is based almost upon a sort of literalistic way of thinking that something is sort of literally handed on from one generation to another like a precious porcelain vase being passed down from father to son or mother to daughter. It is true that there is something of the spirit of the Buddha sort of handed down so to speak - the master sparks off the disciple, the disciple sparks off his disciple - but it is not a sort of thing that is transmitted.

In the Zen schools they also accept this whole idea of lineage, but there is also the notion - at least in some quarters - that lineage, transmission, is not something that takes place in time; it takes place outside time. And that gets them into perhaps philosophical difficulties or at least complications. It seems they do recognize some of the limitations of the usual sort of approach to this idea of lineage, of something handed down, which suggests of course within time.

There is also the suggestion in this whole idea of parampara that what is older is better and what is new is not so good.

Nagabodhi: Do you think, though, that in your own case you could have maybe received more or benefited more from teachers you met in Kalimpong, say, had you been trained for years in a particular tradition, and therefore be more receptive, more able to receive from these people, or did it make no difference that [51] your basic commitment was...?

S: As far as I can recollect it made no difference at all. I can't help thinking that in a way more training or whatever might have made one more closed and less receptive, because what is important is that one should as an individual be open and receptive to another individual. That is the basic thing, that is the basic condition. Not that one should be necessarily well versed in the letter of a particular tradition except to the extent perhaps that some - let us say - language is necessary for the purpose of communication.

Nagabodhi: But the things that don't have to be expressed through the language are more important than the things that do.

S: One could say that that a lot can be expressed through media other than language. If you also look at this question of lineage and tradition in the case of Buddhism, well there is the fact, as we know now with our better historical knowledge, that many things have been handed down but which could not have been handed down by the Buddha himself. They must have crept in at some later period. So even if one accepts the idea that one should follow what has been handed down from the Buddha, one is justified in enquiring, in any given instance, has this really been handed down from the Buddha, and if so what is the proof, what is the evidence? Did the Buddha wear a particular kind of robe? Did the Buddha shave his head in a particular way? Did the Buddha actually teach such and such a thing? All right, if we have to

follow and accept what has been handed down through the generations from the Buddha, we have to be very very careful to make quite sure what the Buddha did actually hand on in the first place. What about all the fancy hats that Tibetan lamas wear? In this book I have read recently, by professor Tucci, [The Religions of Tibet, reviewed by Bhante in FWBO Newsletter no. 47, tr.] there are dozens and dozens of these fancy ceremonial hats. All right, they're very traditional and if you join Tibetan Buddhism, if you join the Tibetan Buddhist group, no doubt you'll have to wear some of these on certain occasions or see lamas wearing them, but do they really go back to the Buddha? Did the Buddha wear any of these sorts of hats? (laughter) So even if we agree that we must follow tradition as it has come down from the Buddha let us make quite sure that it really is tradition and really has come down from the Buddha. I suspect, though, that if you go far enough back all that you'll encounter is the Buddha's own experience of enlightenment and a few quite rudimentary descriptions of that, and a few quite rudimentary indications, quite sufficient for practical purposes, of how to get there.

Clive: What texts are most original?

S: Well, if one takes the Pali canon the texts which seem to get closest to what the Buddha probably originally said are texts like the Sutta Nipata and the Udana and some portions of certain other scriptures. There's some quite old material in the Anguttara Nikaya. This particular text comes from the Anguttara Nikaya.

So as part of the Buddhist tradition we find a plain statement by the Buddha not to go by tradition. So to say, well I'm doing this because this is the tradition of Buddhism, which means in practice the tradition of the particular school of Buddhism that I belong to, is no argument at all. You have [52] to enquire, as you'll see later on, whether it does actually help you in your spiritual life and development. To say this is the practice handed down to us is not enough. In any case you'll probably find that this practice doesn't go back to the days of the Buddha; it's something introduced in relatively recent times in Japan or in China or Ceylon or Tibet.

Vajradaka: This need for a lineage seems stronger in America than it does here. It might tie up with this feeling of a lack of roots.

S: Lack of roots. Now this whole idea of lineage received a strong impetus in Tibet and in China and Japan. One of the interesting points that Tucci makes in his book on Tibetan Buddhism is that Tibetans were very interested in origins, especially the origins of the aristocratic families and in their genealogies. So they seem to have the same sort of interest in sort of spiritual genealogies, and in the same way in China and Japan the family was very important, your ancestry was very important. So they started thinking in terms of your spiritual ancestry. It's as though it's all a hangover from the family-oriented outlook. Not that you are the son of Mr so-and-so, the son of Mrs so-and-so, the son of Mr so-and-so bar Joseph bar something like that, but that you were Upasaka so-and-so or bhikkhu so-and-so, the pupil of so-and-so, the pupil of so-and-so, the pupil of so-and-so, right back to the Buddha, with a certificate to prove it! The certificate became very very important in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. The ordination certificate which was not merely a certificate that you had been ordained but which gave you a whole lineage right back to the Buddha himself so that you belonged to the family of the Buddha. It was a sort of substitute family. Because in Chinese and Japanese thought, yes, the family is so important.

So therefore I'm sure that what you say about Americans being interested in lineages is for this sort of reason, that they haven't got roots. So they want roots, they're looking for roots, so they find these pseudo-spiritual roots in lineages and so on.

Abhaya: What do you think about roots? Having roots.

S: Well to me it's important to have roots in as much as one is a positive healthy human being and a member of the positive healthy group, but roots in that sense have got nothing to do with sources of spiritual inspiration. The two are not the same thing. You aren't any nearer to the transcendental because you trace your connection with it back through time. If what is transmitted is spiritual in the sense of being transcendental, what has it got to do with time? How can it pass through time, how can it pass through a whole succession of teachers and pupils?

Vajradaka: Maybe that isn't so much what concerns people as a purity of teaching. When one says I am a Buddhist, I follow the Buddha's teaching, perhaps it's a way of discriminating as to what really is the Buddha's teaching.

S: But then the question arises: what is purity of teaching? For instance the Zen schools will insist on this, the Theravada schools will insist on this. All right, purity of teaching, let's go into that. Doctrinal teaching. Just purity of doctrinal teaching is very important but it's only pure presumably if it [53] goes right back to the Buddha. Does it all go right back to the Buddha? Quite a lot of it doesn't and if you go right back to the Buddha how much doctrinal teaching do you find? So what does one mean by purity of teaching, purity of doctrine? One can only go back to a particular kind of spiritual experience, but you can't rely upon any particular doctrinal description of that experience. You haven't got it because you've been ordained in a certain way or you haven't got it because you accept a certain doctrinal teaching, you haven't got it because you've received a certain abhisheka let's say. But how do you know then that you've got what the Buddha got? How do you know?

Clive: Haven't subsequent teachings been established by people who've gained enlightenment?

S: Yes, but what is the criterion that their enlightenment was the same as the Buddha's enlightenment let's say?

Manjuvajra: Can't you ultimately only do it by testing it yourself?

S: Well, one rough and ready way which is a pretty good way is just by seeing the fruits, that is to say - let us assume that the records are reasonably accurate - we have some idea of how the Buddha lived and how the Buddha behaved and how he treated other people. We've got some idea of what the fruits of his enlightenment were. So we would expect that people who were enlightened as the Buddha was enlightened would manifest at least something of those sorts of fruits, and as far as we can tell that is what actually was the case. Not that they imitate, not that they copy, the Buddha but the same sorts of fruits are there in their lives. If you take, say, the life of Milarepa, the life of Hakuin, the life of Hui Neng, the same sorts of fruits manifested. So you assume that the tree is pretty much the same tree.

But there's another point also which needs to be made. We're speaking of, say, somebody's

enlightenment being the same as the Buddha's enlightenment but doesn't that sort of presuppose a certain kind of thinking about enlightenment? What sort of thinking?

Abhaya: That it's something that you can attain, some thing.

S: It's a sort of experience which can be duplicated. So in what sense can an experience be duplicated? Is it valid to speak of the duplication of an experience? In what sense does anyone have the same experience as another person? Leaving aside the fact that in the case of the experience which we call enlightenment there is, so to speak, no person who has the experience, because the subject and object distinction is transcended, but to what extent can we speak of a person having the same experience as another person?

Abhaya: You can't, can you?

S: It isn't the same in the sort of mathematical quantitative sense is it? It's the same, I would say, if it is the same only in a sort of functional sense.

Manjuvajra: Isn't it that there's a basic kind of human (trust) somehow that goes there that says that our experiences are somewhat similar, because if they weren't there'd be no basis for communication.[54]

S: You couldn't communicate. So it's as though the Buddhist spiritual community throughout the world and throughout the ages is in sort of communication. It's not that you duplicate the Buddha's experience but that you're all interconnected. The enlightened Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and teachers of various kinds and others perhaps less spiritually gifted - they are all interconnected, they all have a sort of sense of one another. You can speak of them sort of sharing a sort of world, even sort of sharing a sort of experience, provided you use that sort of language poetically rather than as a sort of scientific description. But there is no as it were objective, as it were scientific, proof that any given individual has in fact achieved the same experience as the Buddha achieved. You've no way of proving that. You can't prove it by producing a certificate or by subscribing to a particular doctrinal formula. Because how do you know that you understand that formula in the very way that the Buddha understood it? Is it possible for two people to understand anything in exactly the same way, in any case?

So therefore what are we really asking about when we ask about, say, purity of doctrinal tradition?

Manjuvajra: The tradition has got to come from someone who themselves have been purified to a greater or lesser degree.

S: Yes, but still that leaves the question unanswered as to how do you know whether that purification is the same as somebody else's purification. It raises the question of whether you can know or whether the question is not wrongly put anyway.

Manjuvajra: Does it matter in a way? Surely the important thing is that the teaching should make you grow.

S: Yes, you could even say does it matter? Someone might say, well, you're not in the lineage, you're not in the tradition. All right, so what? Does it matter? You feel that you are in the

lineage, you belong to the lineage, you are in the tradition, well does it really help you? Does it really matter?

Subhuti: People seem to be very naively satisfied anyway. If you just sort of reel off a list of names which are Tibetan or Chinese or whatever they're sort of satisfied.

S: What are they wanting? They're asking for parampara actually. I'm not saying there is nothing more in it than that. One can surely look at it more deeply but, yes, they're looking for tradition in this sort of sense. They're looking for a sort of group identity, a group history.

Nagabodhi: Security.

S: Security. For instance people have said to me regarding such and such a rimpoché, well he's the fourteenth rimpoché. So what? What does that mean, that he's fourteenth, any more than if he'd been, say, the seventh or the ninth? (laughter) We've an Archbishop of Canterbury who's the hundred and second! There's a pope who's the three hundredth and something. If you want that sort of authority, well, there it is, [55] there's more of it in a sense. Because in a way these Tibetan lineages start only two or three hundred years ago in most cases. It's a comparatively recent system. But you've got these Christian Apostolic lineages. Lines of bishops going right back to the time of the Apostles! Well, if you're not very critical. (laughter) But no doubt they do go back a long way. They go right back into the early centuries of Christianity anyway. Most bishops can look back to dozens and dozens of episcopal ancestors.

So are we any the more impressed? If we are impressed by those sorts of things we ought to be more impressed by Christian bishops than we are by Tibetan lamas. I mean the Dalai Lama himself is only the thirteenth Dalai Lama, what's a thirteenth Dalai Lama? (laughter) Thirteen! It's just yesterday!

The first Dalai Lama came at about the time of Queen Elizabeth or something like that. Something like that, something very recent. [The title was first bestowed on the third head of the Gelug School in 1578, and applied retrospectively to previous heads dating back to 1391, tr.] The Queen herself can trace back... (laughter) she's the forty-second or something like that, if you're going to be impressed by these sorts of things!

And how does going back help you? Because even if you go back to the originator, well, you've still got to ask yourself about the validity of his experience. Suppose someone says, well, my experience is valid because I can trace it back twenty generations, thirty generations, forty generations. Well, what about the validity of that man's experience? It doesn't answer that question. The Buddha took his stand on his own experience. He didn't trace it back to anybody, though the Zen people of course will say that he traced it back to previous Buddhas, but that is disproved because previous Buddhas are mentioned only in quite late passages in Pali texts. It's a later idea altogether. In that sort of sense where the Buddha does refer to previous Buddhas at all it is to say that he discovered what had been lost. He doesn't say that he studied it under them and then reproduced it in his generation. No, it had been lost and he did not know it and rediscovered it after it had been lost. So it's as though there's an element of rediscovery for every individual and perhaps you can see how it links up out of time with the discoveries of other individuals out of time only after you've discovered it.

You can only get back, as it were, into the past and know what past enlightened beings experienced when you've got in the present out of time altogether, but you can't go back through time and know it and validate yourself in that way. So therefore in a way the tantric emphasis is right: if you can depend upon anybody it's only on your own teacher with whom you're in contact here and now. You can't go back to the Buddha because you're not in contact with the Buddha. You're not even in contact, say, with your teacher's teacher's teacher. So you've only got your own experience and your own contact and communication with your own teacher. That's all you've got. There's nothing sort of handed down in a literal way.

So the Buddha doesn't allow you to validate your experience through reference to the lineage to which you belong. It's not nearly such a simple matter as that and I must say some of the Western followers of some of these Tibetan and Zen lineages are so complacent and self-satisfied, brandishing their little certificates and so on and strutting around in their traditional robes. It's got nothing to do with Buddhism really. They're going by tradition. They're just finding sort of pseudo-spiritual roots, a pseudo-spiritual genealogical tree with the Buddha at the top and themselves at the bottom. Just like with the same sort [56] of pride that you trace your descent back to a king in the Middle Ages somewhere, in the same way you trace your descent back to the Buddha as though that tells anybody anything about you, as though you have somewhat ennobled yourself or spiritualized yourself by tracing your lineage back.

Vajradaka: It's amazing how that used to happen. Just thinking of...

S: You could be so proud and so conceited because you could trace your lineage back to Charlemagne, but so what? If you're a miserable ignorant creature here in the twentieth century what does it matter if a drop or two of the blood of Charlemagne flows in your veins. So in the same way suppose your teacher was the pupil of the pupil of the pupil of someone tracing himself right back to the Buddha, so what? Is any spark of enlightenment in you? You're just sort of exploiting the name of the Buddha to justify your own pretensions and your own self-importance. This is all that is happening, but this is what is going on in so many so-called Buddhist circles. But you'll have to be saying all these things probably in the States. You'll be meeting these sorts of things perhaps. Maybe these sorts of attitudes on the part even of quite well-meaning people who hadn't thought about it very much, who just swallowed whatever they were told.

Vajradaka: I often get asked what is a lineage, like you just carry it around.

S: Anyway so - "nor upon tradition." Then "Nor upon rumour". What is that in Pali: *ma itikiraya*: not on just something that's said, hearsay, hearsay's not bad. Gossip, rumour. The Buddha began by saying, do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing, nor upon tradition, but now he says, nor upon rumour. In a way you can understand people being influenced by what they hear over and over and over again, but it's not just that. We are influenced by just a little rumour that we hear. Something quite casual, something just quite passing, a little piece of gossip, a little scrap of information. That influences us tremendously. We take that as our criteria, we take that as gospel. So that also we shouldn't do.

Clive: Is it because it's easy to believe?

S: I think it's not only that; I think it's also that people want to believe. They go around almost looking for something to believe in. So they often believe on very inadequate grounds. You

find this with some of the Christian sects. They expect you to believe on very inadequate grounds or grounds that we would regard as very inadequate. The bit about the blood of Jesus and Jesus dying for you and you're expected to be overwhelmed and be converted on the spot ...

[end of tape 3, start of tape 4]

Vajradaka: ... spiritual or pseudo-spiritual things that are easily accepted are like in the sphere of astrology and things like that... slightly less understandable things. It was very common in the early seventies. Someone would say 'Oh, Jupiter's rising - that means such and such is in the air. You can see it all around you. Everyone's got colds and it's because Jupiter's up, or whatever.

S: Or rumour goes round that it's the Aquarian Age or you hear a [57] rumour that there's some great teacher on the way. We used to hear this in the sixties and early seventies didn't we? That's how I first heard about Guru Maharaj. I heard about Guru Maharaj from someone who was staying with me for a while. He was getting all excited. He'd heard about this boy guru who'd emerged in India. He didn't know anything more about him than that a boy guru had emerged and he was taken by this very idea of a boy guru and eventually became one of Guru Maharaj's followers, but he couldn't tell me at that stage anything more about him except that he was a boy guru and there were these posters appearing announcing the boy guru and people used to go about telling one another, (whispers) 'Have you heard about this boy guru who's come to the West?' (laughter) Rumour was going around in that sort of way. There was no content to it but that was enough for people. They grabbed it. Do you remember this? I remember it very well.

Nagabodhi: I remember a similar thing really, for the Karmapa, when he came over. It seems again to go with the Tibetans. It's not as if there's a newspaper that circulates this information, but Friends House in Euston is always packed at the seams when somebody comes, and people know nothing about the Karmapa really and yet most people could probably talk for five minutes about his lineage and the hat he wears.

S: Right. This black hat.

Subhuti: He's certainly a Buddha. I heard somebody say that and they'd never actually seen him.

Nagabodhi: Incredible stories get around about him and it's all rumour because there is no publication apart from I think 'Vajra' - they did a little article on him.

S: I remember even when I was in Kalimpong I heard a rumour of a miracle which the Dalai Lama was supposed to have worked at a certain meeting, and I actually cross-examined people who had been present, Tibetan officials actually. They were quite unable to tell me anything about it. They apparently hadn't seen or observed anything of that sort even though they were present on the occasion. A great boulder was supposed to have fallen down from the mountain right on to the heads of the crowd and he was supposed to have held it up there by his magic power to prevent it falling on them or something like that, but several Tibetan officials whom I asked about it assured me that they hadn't seen any such thing. But the rumour was going round the bazaars of Kalimpong.

So therefore the Buddha says do not go upon rumour.

Nagabodhi: Isn't the entire Christian tradition based on rumour really? (laughter)

S: Well, you'd better be careful because somebody might say isn't the entire Buddhist tradition based upon that, but yes, in a special sense the Christian tradition is. The rumour of the resurrection, or at least what was subsequently interpreted as the resurrection. People are still producing proofs that it must actually have happened which must mean that they're still feeling a bit unsure about it. [58]

Nagabodhi: There's the excitement over the Turin shroud.

S: Yes indeed.

Nagabodhi: Which in itself, whatever it says, doesn't prove anything about the spirituality of Christ, but it does seem to serve to excite people incredibly.

S: It could be proved, perhaps, conceivably that that actually was a shroud that actually was used to wrap the body of a man who actually was crucified, and that man who was crucified could be identical with the historical founder of Christianity. So what? (laughter) But the truth of Christianity is supposed to be attested by bits of the veil of the virgin Mary, (?) of the virgin Mary's milk, the shoe of the donkey or the mule or whatever on which the holy family went into Jerusalem. The nails from the cross. They've got an extraordinary variety of all these sort of bizarre relics which is supposed to in some way attest to the truth of Christianity. Well, they might be interesting as little historical keepsakes but what more than that? Lumps of earth from Golgotha, the bridle of Balaam's ass.. (laughter) They've gone through the whole lot in different churches around the Christian world. In fact sometimes they've got dozens and dozens of them.

Subhuti: Aren't there enough nails of the cross to build a battleship?

S: They say that's disproved. Not quite as many as that. (laughter) But so what? The very same Christ in the gospel is reported as saying words to this effect - the people seek for a sign but they shall be given no sign [e.g. Mark 8:12, tr.]. But it is significant the way that people catch a little rumour and take it for gospel and pass it on and expect you to believe it. This is no criterion for establishing the truth. Obviously it has to be rejected as such but it is psychologically very very interesting. And these are the things which move people and which create 'movements' - inverted commas - whirls or swirls of activity within the group.

Vajradaka: I've even noticed a tendency for this very recently within the Movement after a few people met John Deer. They were actually trying to convince me of his spiritually elevated state, and if I was just a little bit critical they felt that I was (a traitor to) them or I was being critical of them and I should just accept it. It's quite strange.

Subhuti: I think the advertising medium might be the modern form of rumour, but again in spiritual circles ...

S: I'm sort of including that under the first of the Buddha's criteria to be rejected in account of the element of repetition, but "rumour" seems to suggest something that you just hear once or

twice - it's very vague - but still it has tremendous appeal and you believe it even though it is something passing and transitory.

Nagabodhi: Is it not the case - taking the Movement and the rumours that get round in the Movement - for example about things you've said - that happens on the whole when the rumour corresponds to something people want to hear. It's not so [59] much the rumour that needs to be attacked so much as that weakness or the fact that the connection is actually rumour and micchaditthi. On the whole a rumour that doesn't necessarily appeal to people doesn't ...

S: It dies a natural death.

Nagabodhi: Yes. But if it corresponds to what people would like to hear then it gets round very quickly.

S: There was something I was supposed to have said recently. What was that? I'll think of it in a minute perhaps.

So do not go upon what has been acquired upon repeated hearing nor upon tradition nor upon rumour. So the Buddha in a way is going quite deep, isn't he, with these few words, exploring quite deeply people's conditionedness and their willingness to believe. I think I said some time ago that I sometimes got the impression apropos the activities of various spiritual groups and their followers - pseudo-spiritual groups and their followers - it's as though people were going around saying "please deceive me, please deceive me, I want to be deceived, I want to be exploited." Don't you agree? What is this? It can't be entirely unhealthy or neurotic surely. Is it not perhaps a deformation of something genuine and positive?

Manjuvajra: People haven't got any kind of direction or purpose or anything to really stimulate them, and they want something but they don't have the ability to make the search and choice - they just want to be given something which they can follow.

S: For instance relatively speaking the FWBO makes a very small, a very limited, appeal. One would have imagined that it would have attracted far more people but there are groups that attract - even if they aren't able to keep - far more people than we attract or keep.

Clive: I think one of the main things here is that with other groups, well, for a start they're groups and people can surrender themselves and also surrender their responsibility to that group, whereas with the Friends people are encouraged to actually think more for themselves and that's what makes it quite hard for some people.

S: What people are actually being told very often is: don't worry, we'll do it for you, or I'll do it for you, and especially: I'll save you. And then if you make that sort of statement you have to make some sort of claim. 'I'll save you because I'm God,' or 'I'm the incarnation of God,' or 'I'm in touch with God,' or 'I represent God,' 'I can do it.' So you can't make that sort of appeal unless you make some sort of claim, and this is what we actually find happening, even in the case of Buddhism unfortunately, with the Karmapa. If you see the Karmapa wearing his hat, his black hat - and this is what was said in their official publicity handout - you're sure of salvation. Wasn't it so?[60]

Vajradaka: This isn't a very well formulated thought but I think that quite a lot of people are prepared to, say, deceive me because there's a whole area of prejudice in their mind. It's like very often people who do go for a movement which is just giving them simple things on a plate which they don't have to think very much about, do have an underlying attitude of prejudice not wanting to question either things about themselves or they want to be able to take a position of opposition, in a way, to us, and that maybe by having a very simple reason why they can accept and team up with a certain leader - it gives them a good opportunity to practise that prejudice against everyone else.

S: You mean the attraction is that you're one of the chosen people?

Vajradaka: Something like that.

S: You find this very strongly with some of the smaller Christian churches. It's difficult to feel that you're one of the chosen people when you belong to a really big church, even though in principle they do believe that the church inherits God's promises to the children of Israel and that the children of Israel forfeited their position as God's chosen people when they rejected Christ and that the Christian church inherited that position. But it's difficult to feel that you're one of the chosen when everybody else is one of the chosen too. But if you've gone to a very small group and a very small sort of splinter sect that's broken away from everybody else, because they're pure and they're right, well it's quite easy to feel that you're one of the chosen people, one of the chosen few, and I think quite a lot of people like to have that sort of feeling.

\_\_\_: I'd have thought that was more reason for people wanting to be involved with traditions, wanting to be part of a lineage, if they wanted to be part of the chosen few. That gives you an element of being special - belonging to a lineage.

S: You've got a certificate others don't have. It was once said - there was a little anecdote that someone heard a modern Italian boasting that he was a descendant of the ancient Romans who had conquered the world. So the person who heard him making this claim said, yes, he was a descendant - he agreed - of the ancient Romans, but in the same way that a wasp that was born within the dead body, the carcass of a horse, was the descendant of the horse. (laughter) I'm afraid this applies to some Buddhists with their lineages and certificates.

I remember when I was ordained as a bhikkhu the first thing that I was told by the thera who presided, he took me aside and he said you are very lucky, you've been ordained into the Sudhamma Nikaya - it's a very old nikaya. That was the first thing I was told. A nikaya meaning a subdivision of the monastic order. I had no idea. I didn't know anything about nikayas. Anyway he assured me I was very lucky to have been ordained into the Sudhamma Nikaya - it was a very old nikaya. He meant well, so to speak, but spiritually speaking it was rather beside the point.

Anyway we're going to stop there for today. We've got just a few minutes left so if there's anything we've done which isn't completely clear we can just deal with that.

What do you think is the drift, broadly speaking, of the [61] Buddha's argument so to speak when he says do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing, nor upon tradition, nor upon rumour? What is the general trend as it were of his thought?

Manjuvajra: It seems to be, don't rely on anything that's taught just because it's been told to you, no matter what the authority.

S: Don't rely upon what comes from outside. It's not that you shouldn't be helped or shouldn't depend in a positive way, but it is not in itself necessarily a criterion of truth. You shouldn't accept something simply because you're told it many times, you shouldn't accept it simply because it comes down to you in tradition, shouldn't accept it simply because you've heard a rumour to that effect. It doesn't mean that you must therefore automatically reject all of these. He doesn't say reject everything that you've heard: reject tradition, reject rumour - he doesn't say that. But he says sift it, find out for yourself, ascertain for yourself, don't automatically reject everything you hear but the fact that you hear it is not in itself sufficient grounds for accepting it. You may need to suspend judgement, you may not be in a position to make any decision or to come to any conclusion. You may just not know at all. So you're not in a position either of rejecting or of accepting. You may remain in that position for some time.

All right then, we'll leave it there for today.

S: I've been referring to this translation as Nyanaponika's but I see, no, it's Soma Thera's translation so I should correct that. It's published by Nyanaponika. I knew him personally actually. I met him.

\_\_\_: Where's he from?

S: Ceylon. He died many years ago. He's mentioned in my memoirs. [The Rainbow Road, p.436, tr.] I forget if I mentioned his name but he wrote to me and wanted to know why I wasted my time writing Buddhist poems when I could write such good articles. And in the same post I got a letter, you may remember, from a Sinhalese laywoman who says she wondered why I wasted time writing those dry intellectual articles when I could write such nice poems! (laughter) I got both letters in the same post, the same delivery. So I thought, you just can't please everybody. (?) can't please anybody.

[next session]

S: So we've got as far as page 6. "Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition: nor upon rumour." So we come now today to "nor upon what is in a scripture". So what is the Pali - it's ma pitakasampadanena. So what does that mean - pitaka? What is a pitaka?

Subhuti: A basket.

S: It's a basket, it's a collection. In Buddhism, in Buddhist tradition, there is the collection, the three pitakas, that is to say the Sutta Pitaka, Vinaya Pitaka, Abhidharma Pitaka.[62]

Clearly here the word is used in a general sense because in the Buddha's day there were no pitakas of Buddhist teachings, much less still of Buddhist scriptures, so it would seem that the term was in general use for a collection of religious teachings, a collection of religious traditions, which was somehow or other, in some way or other, regarded as authoritative, as for instance the Vedas were.

So what we are concerned with here is not going upon an authoritative scripture - an authoritative, even an infallible, sacred book. At this stage clearly an oral collection was referred to, but eventually the oral collections were written down so one had scriptures. So the Buddha is saying that one cannot take as a criterion of the truth of a statement the fact that it is found in a collection of scriptures which is regarded as authoritative of that particular tradition, that particular religion. Obviously all sorts of questions arise here, especially in the Western context with regard to Christianity, with regard to the Bible, and one can even raise the same question in connection with the Buddhist scriptures themselves. How do Buddhists regard them?

But first of all maybe let's try to get a general idea, a general understanding, of the sort of attitude that the Buddha is in fact rejecting, an idea of what in fact he is rejecting here.

Nagabodhi: Observing a kind of pure fundamentalism. (?) be dependent simply on words and letters, letters of the law. Over reaching.

Surata: Blind faith.

S: Blind faith, one could say, but it's a specific form which that blind faith takes. It's a blind faith in the sacred book as the authority from which you cannot appeal. It's as though if someone can quote from the sacred book, well, that ends all discussion, that's that. We're quite familiar with this attitude from our contact with Christianity, especially some extreme Protestant groups and churches. Many of them seem to feel that if they can only tell you it's in the Bible, this is what the Bible says, well, that carries instant conviction. You're not supposed to discuss or argue. You're supposed only to accept.

Abhaya: I think a lot of this relates to theism, doesn't it? The Bible's supposed to be inspired directly by God therefore how could you possibly question that? I think this attitude to scriptures, even Buddhist scriptures, in the early chronicles...

S: But it's not only theistic religions that have an infallible book, because the Hindus have the Vedas which are said to be aparasha, that is to say without any human author. There are different theories about them. Some believe the Vedas to be eternal and uncreated much as the Muslims regard the Koran. Muslims seem to regard the Koran - though again there are different schools of thought - regard the book as a sort of reflection of - we might say an archetypal Koran which is eternal and everlasting and infallible.

But the basic idea is of an authority from which there is no appeal. A written authority.

Vajradaka: Maybe it has something to do with the preoccupation [63] with words as being the conveyors of truth anyway, rather than something beyond words as being expressive. The word is the last thing, the last word. In the beginning there was the word.

S: That's rather different. That's in a way a different line of thought I would say, because one can say, well, words are necessary to communicate. One can't really go beyond words for ordinary human purposes. The Buddha also used words, but the question is how you take those words, whether you take the, as it were, inner meaning or whether you try to fix upon a definite form of words, perhaps missing the meaning, missing the spirit. One might say that sacred books are regarded as sacred books by millions of people, regarded as authoritative,

but how did what are regarded as sacred books actually start? They didn't start as sacred books. For instance, how did the Vedas start? What are the Vedas? The Vedas essentially are collections of hymns addressed to various gods, various Vedic deities, and many of these hymns are very beautiful, they're very poetic, and they seem to have been composed in a mood of inspiration by people that the Indians call rishis, which means seers. They're poetry - some of them - of quite a high order. So one can imagine these Vedic rishis, these Vedic seers as invoking for instance the sun and the dawn and the god of thunder and storm in these hymns, and later on they went on to invoke gods that represented not simply natural phenomena but ethical principles. There are even some very fine philosophical hymns. But at a later date, at a later stage, the hymns started to be used apparently for ritualistic purposes, were recited in the context of sacrifices, and sacrifices became more important than the hymns, the hymns were just recited on the occasion of the sacrifices and the meaning of the hymns perhaps was forgotten, and the hymns were gradually all collected together, collected together with a lot of other material, collected into four great groups - the Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda. These were the four Vedas. Well in fact originally there were only three. In the Buddhist scriptures the Buddha and other people regularly referred to the three Vedas. The Atharva Veda was apparently collected after, or received its final form after, the time of the Buddha and it's a very mixed bag indeed. It contains a lot of what we would regard as folk magic, a lot of spells and charms, but also some highly philosophical hymns.

But eventually the whole collection, the whole of this ancient Indian literature as we might describe it, some of it very valuable as literature, was regarded as a sort of revelation. It came to be regarded as infallible, came to be regarded as an independent source of knowledge, as a pramana - technically speaking - and one had schools of thought based upon this notion of the divinity, the eternity, and the infallibility of the Vedas. There is one particular view which is generally expressed in these terms, that a cow exists in the material world because it is mentioned in the Vedas. (laughter) So the Veda comes to be regarded as the source of existence itself. So you cannot go against the Vedas, and it is in the Vedas that orthodox Hindus find their justification for the caste system. There is in the Vedas, in the Rig Veda, what is sometimes described as a hymn to the cosmic man, the purusha, and it is described in this hymn how the four main castes were created from the different limbs, from the different parts of the body, of this cosmic man. The brahmins were created from his head, the Kshatriyas were created from his shoulders, the Vaishyas were created from his thighs, and the Shudras were created from his feet. The Untouchables are not even mentioned. They are unmentionable. They don't really [64] exist because they're not mentioned in the Vedas you could say. So the orthodox Hindu finds the justification even today for the caste system - in the sense of the hard and fast division of one caste from another - in the Vedas, and therefore regards the whole caste system as divinely ordained, divinely established, divinely instituted, so that it is sacrilege to go against it.

We find much the same sort of attitude among Christians. Maybe not so much now as in the past. There is a verse of the Bible where Christ is supposed to have said according to the gospel, the poor you shall always have with you. [e.g. Matt 26:11, tr.] So therefore if you tried to abolish poverty you were trying to make God a liar. Again in the book of Genesis God says to Eve, in pain thou shalt bring forth, [Gen 3:16, tr.] and this was quoted as an argument against the use of anaesthetic in childbirth because again you're trying to make God a liar, you're going against the word of God. This is the way in which these infallible scriptures are used. Recently, someone mentioned yesterday evening, we've had examples in the

newspapers, in the correspondence columns, as to what the Koran has to say about the punishment for adultery. There's some dispute whether the Koran actually does say in so many words that the adulterer must be stoned to death. Apparently the Koran doesn't say that. Apparently it merely says the adulterer should be put to death, I believe, or punished with stripes. The stoning to death of the adulterer is what you call a Hadith, a tradition, not a sura(?) of the Koran itself. [This is unclear. The Hadiths collectively form a supplement to the Koran, which is called the Sunna. tr.]

But the basic idea is that whatever the Koran says goes. It cannot be questioned. It is the word of God. So as far as the Bibles of the theistic religions are concerned what you are up against is the word of God himself. How dare you whom God has created argue with your creator! What presumption, what insolence, what ingratitude, what disobedience, how could you dare to do such a thing? You have only to say 'I hear and obey'; that is all that you are supposed to say.

So the Buddha is going - in the words of this translation - the Buddha is saying, nor upon what is in a scripture. You cannot take that for a criterion. Not that you should reject everything that is in a scripture just because it is in a scripture, but you're not to accept it merely because it is in a scripture.

Manjuvajra: What is the actual Pali?

S: Well the Pali construction is rather different from the English. It's simply "not by such and such", "do not go" it is understood. Etha tumhe Kalama ma anussavena ma paramparaya ma itikiraya ma pitakasampadanena: Not by such and such, not by such and such.

So the question arises, well, what use is to be made of scriptures? Is there a way in which they can be rightly used? What about the Buddhist so-called scriptures? An anthology of Buddhist texts in translation has been published called a Buddhist Bible. You may remember I wrote a little essay on the question of a Buddhist Bible - it comes in 'Crossing the Stream' - because there was a proposal at that time to put together a Buddhist Bible. So I was quite happy about the idea of putting together an anthology of translations of Buddhist texts, but I wasn't at all happy about it being called a Bible or regarded as a Bible for obvious reasons. I did find among some Buddhists a tendency to look at the Buddhist scriptures themselves, or one or another of the Buddhist scriptures, in a way that I could only regard as Christian or Islamic or Hindu rather than truly Buddhist. Has anyone had any experience of this sort of thing?

Manjuvajra: I've had the experience myself. I've got very confused [65] by all the Buddhist scriptures and I wanted to know which ones were the ones that you actually had to read and follow.

S: Well that's fair enough, because presumably one reads and follows intelligently and one wants to know which are the most authentic, historically speaking, but you weren't looking for the divinely inspired scripture I take it.

Manjuvajra: I was at that time.

S: You were at that time. (laughter) And did you meet any other people who were able to tell you that this is the divinely inspired Buddhist scripture, so to speak, and that isn't, and so on?

Nagabodhi: The Nichiren ...

S: The Nichiren people. They really do seem to regard the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, the White Lotus Sutra, in much the same way that fundamentalist Christians regard the Bible.

Subhuti: In an absolutely amazingly literalistic way as well. They don't interpret it philosophically. If it says that a Bodhisattva blazes for a thousand years then that's what actually happens.

S: Right. And of course you find it among the Theravadins. The Theravadins tend to treat the Pali Tipitaka not only as the word of the Buddha but for all practical purposes as infallible. They don't apply any sort of critical standards to the Pali Tipitaka. They don't have any sense of the fact that certain portions are early and certain portions are late and certain portions go back to the Buddha and certain portions clearly don't. They regard the whole thing as completely reliable - almost a shorthand stenographic report of what the Buddha actually said. In other words their view is completely uncritical. And since the Buddha was enlightened and since his words were transmitted by enlightened and infallible arhants before they were actually written down, they don't regard it as possible to question a single word of the scriptures. But this is clearly not a Buddhistic attitude because the very scriptures themselves in passages like this contradict that sort of attitude, and it is rather interesting that the word which the Buddha uses here - pitaka - is the very word which later was attached to the Buddhist scriptures themselves when they became scriptures, let us say, or even perhaps before they became scriptures, when they were still only oral traditions.

But it's very easy to settle down into the habit of regarding a certain text, a certain book, as authoritative, so that if you can only quote from that book, quote from that text, then you've clinched the argument, you've proved the point, you've closed the discussion. And of course in the case of Christianity, after all since the Bible is a very miscellaneous collection of literature indeed, you can quote all sorts of texts for all sorts of purposes. You can quote one text against another. In other words you can pick out a text to support more or less whatever you want to, which means you repudiate responsibility, you claim the support of the Bible for your course of action. If you want to burn witches at the stake, well you can find a text in the Bible, 'thou shall not suffer a witch to live' says the book of Leviticus [it's actually Exodus 22:18, tr.]. There's your authority, you're carrying out God's word [66] if you kill witches, because the books of the Old Testament were composed over a period of about a thousand years perhaps. The books of the New Testament were composed over a shorter period but the literature is of a very miscellaneous nature indeed.

It has been shown that some parts of the Old Testament are based on Babylonian sources. They represent a sort of pseudo-historical version of Babylonian myth and legend subsequently taken quite literally by the Jews and subsequently by the Christians. So it's a very interesting, a very rich, a very fascinating literature, but it's much safer and wiser to regard it as literature, even inspirational literature in part, than it is to regard it as the infallible word of God from which you have only to select texts appropriate to your purpose, you see? I talked about my friend's God yesterday evening but, you see, what was the point of that in a way: that this particular friend of mine believed himself to be inspired by God. He believed himself to be carrying out God's will. So I studied him very very closely over a number of years and it was quite interesting, and I came to the conclusion that as a young man he must have had very strong religious or let me say pseudo-spiritual ambitions. He seemed to have

read quite a bit of religious literature, theosophical literature, Oxford group type literature. He was rather familiar with this idea of the voice within inspiring you and so on, and it seemed to me that he wanted to start a sort of religious or spiritual movement of his own. It seemed to me that he was very ambitious in that sort of way but didn't actually have the self confidence - or let us say perhaps even the equipment - to do that. But at the same time the desire to do it was very great. Perhaps not altogether acknowledged on his part. So I came to the conclusion that his desire, his wish, to found and to lead a big religious movement, had gradually been suppressed and became in fact quite unconscious, and he went through a sort of crisis - which he described to me - in which God started speaking to him and telling him what to do. So it was clear to me that the voice which he heard came from his own repressed or suppressed desires to be this sort of person. In other words it was that suppressed part of his own personality that was speaking to him, but he took it that God now was speaking to him.

So because it was God telling him what to do it wasn't his responsibility any more. He could admit, yes I'm a quite incapable person, I'm not very highly spiritually developed but it doesn't matter, God is telling me what to do, I'm only carrying out God's orders. And he firmly believed that everything that came to him came to him from God, and that therefore not only had he to obey but everybody else had to obey: his wife had to obey, his children had to obey, his friends and his employees, they all had to obey. The whole world had to obey. This was his point. And he used to go into sort of trance-like states and produce automatic scripts. He'd sit with his eyes closed scribbling away and then there's a whole sort of ream of orders from God produced, much of it highly philosophical, and I once or twice had the experience of finding him reproducing in this way as from God things that I said in lectures of my own which he had heard but which he'd got slightly wrong, but then that had to be justified because God couldn't be wrong, so he used to explain to me that I'd got it wrong and that God was correcting me. For instance, I remember he got the four sunyatas muddled up but he tried to convince me that the version which came in his script from God was the right version and that the Buddhist tradition had diverged centuries ago from the teaching of the Buddha and that God, through him, was now correcting this! (laughter) You see the sort of complications you can get yourself into. Because God has to be right and you have to be right.

So he and his little movement, they regarded these scripts as [67/1] a sort of Bible. Well, yes, his disciples said, well, they're just like the Vedas, they're just like the Bible, they're just like the Tipitaka, they've come straight from God through this friend of mine. But his wife - this was what I didn't tell you last night - his wife wouldn't accept all this and I knew his wife quite well over a number of years. I used to stay with her in Poona and his wife used to tell me, 'It's only his way of getting his own way!' (laughter) and she was a very obstinate woman of great strength of character and she was not accepting, she would not obey. And he said - this was all going on during my friendship with him - he said to her if you don't obey, if you don't accept what God tells you, I'm not going to live with you and I'm not going to allow you to live with me. She said, all right, I'm not going to accept it, I don't care. She was a Parsi woman, he was a Parsi too and they can be quite strong-minded women, so he lived in Bombay and she lived in Poona; they fortunately had these two houses. And she'd occasionally look in on him in Bombay and he'd occasionally stay in Poona but they were both quite obstinate characters, and she died a few years ago unreconciled. She would not accept that whatever he said was God's own word and he would not accept her non-acceptance, and of course it divided the family too. The children suffered a little bit from this. There were two children one of whom I still know quite well whom I met in Bombay last time I was there. That's the one about whom I wrote that it's not very easy to be God's son, as

it were, to work full time for God. But I was very interested to study this because I could see an infallible scripture in the making. I found this really fascinating to study the whole psychology of, as it were, the prophet. The man who believes himself to be inspired by God, who believes that God is behind him, that whatever he says God is saying, that in a sense he is God, because you don't see God, you don't hear God; he does. So for all intents and purposes he is God and he used to behave in a way like that as much as he could.

But I could see how there had occurred this sort of split in his consciousness. How his desire, as it were, to be a religious leader had become submerged, had gone deep down into his unconscious and had re-emerged, so to speak, as a voice sort of coming from outside which told him what to do, so that he could accept it then, as it were, in good faith. It's not what I want to do, it's God's will. So in the same way, and this is where we come back to the original point, the person who believes or professes to believe or to accept an infallible scripture, is not altogether honest. It's not quite that they really genuinely believe that this scripture is inspired by God and are really genuinely trying to follow it. There are a few people who have that attitude but the majority try to find in the scripture some sort of justification, some sort of support, for what they want to do so that then they can claim that God is behind them, and this gives them a tremendous sort of self confidence, it gives them a tremendous sense of rightness, even righteousness, even self righteousness, that enables them to work very very hard. They're not only doing what they want to do, they're doing it with the full conviction, at least in their conscious minds, that this is what God wants them to do.

So this is why these divinely inspired infallible scriptures are so dangerous. It's not simply that people accept them implicitly, it's that people are able to put the full weight of the authority of those scriptures behind what they want to do, [67/2] which is very often something quite unskilful from the Buddhist point of view.

Subhuti: It does seem that many people talk with God, many people seem to be in direct contact with God. Do you think there is usually the same sort of reason?

S: I think that some personalities are more loosely associated than others. We can all carry on internal dialogues with ourselves. I think in the case of some people this happens to a quite extraordinary degree and they can even actually hear, at least within their own minds, a voice which seems to be an external voice with which or with whom they can carry on conversations and which can tell them what to do. And under certain circumstances, under certain theological conditions, you can believe that that is in fact the voice of God. It may even be the voice of your own higher nature from which you are alienated to some degree, but with which you're also to some degree in touch. It may in fact be a spiritual message of some value. One can't always discount that possibility. But it's your interpretation that is all wrong or it's rather the rigidity of your interpretation that is all wrong. You don't, as it were, say to yourself, well here is something that seems inspiring, it seems to come from some higher source, it's probably from my own higher nature, let me learn from that, let me consider it, let me turn it over in my mind. You don't so much say that - you say, well, it's God - meaning the infallible creator of the universe - it's God's word, I can't question it. So you just sort of act upon it, you just accept it quite literally and quite straightforwardly, as it were, in a quite naive sort of way. I'm not ruling out the possibility even that there may be other let us say intelligences in the universe that may enter into communication with you. So what? Even when that happens you are not to accept what you hear from them at its face value necessarily, any more than you would accept at its face value what any human being said to

you in the ordinary way. You still have to understand, appropriate, and assimilate for yourself.

Abhaya: It does seem to turn on this question of responsibility doesn't it? Really wanting deep down someone to tell you what to do. That seems to be the very deep psychological motivation. If someone else can actually give you the word you're all right and don't have ... you can blindly follow and you're sort of free.

S: It does occur to me that that represents a sort of infantile attitude because when you were young, when you were very small, what happened? You were totally dependent upon your parents, you did whatever your parents told you to do, you believed them, you had blind faith in them. Well, that was necessary at that time otherwise you couldn't have survived. Everything that your parents told you was gospel truth. If your parents told you about Father Christmas you believed it. If your parents had told you that two and two were five you would have believed them. So you get from that a sort of sense of security. So I think therefore that as you grow up in adult life even, that when the going gets tough, when you start experiencing stresses and strains, you can't bear the burden of responsibility, you start hankering after some authority, you start wanting some sort of parental figure almost that can just tell you what to do, that you can have an implicit faith and belief in, so that you don't have to think any more, don't have to worry any more, you just have to [67/3] carry out orders. Which is why some people join the army isn't it? Because in the army you just have to carry out orders, you don't have to think, unless you're quite near the top. So one could say that this whole trend, this whole tendency, to find an infallible authority, whether a person or a book that you can simply follow without any thought, represents a regression, a sort of abdication of responsibility, a reversion to a sort of childlike state. Of course some Christians realize this, they make a virtue of it, that your faith should be simple and childlike and you should just obey like a little child. Well, that is not seen as a virtue in Buddhism.

Abhaya: What about ... I remember in the Thousand-Petalled Lotus when you decided to subject yourself to that teacher in Kalimpong. That's a different sort of thing. [This is a reference to *The Rainbow Road* (previously published in part as *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus*); see p.449 and p.456, tr.]

S: Well, this is what I decided to do. I mean he himself did not say anything to me but I decided that that would be a good thing for me to do. Like exposing yourself to Shakespeare you could say.

Nagabodhi: Would you say that if you were going to do that you should set a definite time limit?

S: I don't recollect that I did but perhaps one should.

Nagabodhi: Because otherwise just to say, well, it's a deliberate choice of mine...

Subhuti: You deliberately subject yourself to God. You could deliberately subject yourself to God.

S: But when you say you deliberately submit yourself to God, what in fact do you submit yourself to?

\_\_\_: Somebody else!

Manjuvajra: There isn't a God, so you can't submit...

S: Yes. You can submit yourself to another human being because there he is, but it isn't quite like that in the case of submitting yourself to God because, all right, even supposing you submit yourself to the Bible, you decide to follow the Bible implicitly - assuming that it does say the same thing throughout which is a very big assumption indeed - all right, why the Bible? Why not the Koran? Why not the four Vedas? It's you who have to decide in the end. It's you that has to endow one or another of these scriptures with that sort of infallibility and then obey it.

\_\_\_: The nearest it seems that you could come to that was using the dice. If you just wrote down six possible decisions...

S: So the question arises, to come back to the point we departed from, what is the correct use of scriptures, especially Buddhist scriptures. What are the Buddhist scriptures really?

\_\_\_: Pointers.

S: No. let's be a bit more basic than that. What are the Buddhist scriptures?[68]

Abhaya: They're records of the founder of Buddhism.

S: Right, yes. They're on the whole, by and large, the records of the words of the Buddha. Let's assume that the record is reasonably accurate, well, where does that leave us? It's as though the Buddha was speaking to us, it was as though the Buddha was teaching us if you like. So what is happening in that situation? What is that situation?

Abhaya: You mean reading the scriptures?

S: Yes, you read the scriptures. The Buddha is saying something. He's addressing certain people, but to some extent also at least he's addressing you. So what is that situation? In other words what is the relation then between the Buddha and you?

\_\_\_: Teacher and pupil.

S: Teacher and pupil, yes. So what does that imply? What is the nature of that teacher pupil relationship? What is happening?

\_\_\_: He's communicating something.

S: He's communicating something to you. Perhaps you can go even a stage back beyond that. That someone is saying something to you. Someone, i.e. the Buddha in the scripture, is saying something to somebody else, but let's say you overhear that. You also, to some extent at least, are in the same position as the person to whom the Buddha is speaking, so therefore you don't just overhear, one can say. The Buddha is speaking to you or someone is speaking to you. So what happens then? How do you take that? What is your experience?

Nagabodhi: Just on that basis you think about it and reflect.

S: Yes, but do you come to any sort of conclusion? Do you feel anything? Especially perhaps as you read through quite a stretch of text, quite a stretch of scripture, and this particular person is speaking to you, as it were. Do you feel anything? What is your response? What is your reaction?

\_\_\_: you might be inspired by what's being said.

S: Yes, you might be inspired by what was being said. You might feel or you might recognize that it is coming from a higher source than you normally have access to within yourself. It's not that it's labelled a higher source. It's not that, well, you know in advance that it must be from a higher source because it comes from God, or even that it comes from Buddha, but as you go through you yourself feel that you are receiving something through the words of this person recorded here which is from a higher source. You feel this yourself. So what is your sort of reaction then? Well, you feel that you've something to learn, you've something to gain. You feel that you can benefit, that you are actually being helped, you are seeing things more clearly and you're experiencing this for yourself at first hand. You're not accepting it on faith, that these are the words of the Buddha, the Buddha was the enlightened one and they must do you good because they're the Buddha's words. No, you are experiencing it and feeling it for yourself.

So this is the right use, one might say, [69] of the Buddhist scriptures. The right use of the Buddhist scriptures is the same as the right use of the Buddha's actual words if you happened to be present to hear them. You are aware of the fact that those words come from a higher source than you represent, but you don't take that on authority. You yourself feel that, you yourself experience that, just as when you read a poem. Suppose you read Shakespeare, suppose you read Shelley, you cannot but experience for yourself that Shakespeare is a greater poet than you'll ever be, that Shelley is a greater poet than you will ever be, in this life at least. You recognize that yourself, and therefore you open yourself to the kind of inspiration that their works represent. In the same way, reading the Buddhist scriptures, you come to recognize that there's a source of inspiration here which is far deeper than anything within your experience and you open yourself to it. It may be, of course, in the case of Shakespeare and Shelley, you've heard that they're great poets, so you are maybe predisposed to like them, to admire them, but that predisposition is no substitute for your actual experience of their greatness, your experience of their imagination, when you actually read them. And in the same way you might well have heard, yes, that Buddhist scriptures are based on the Buddha's words, you know that the Buddha is supposed to be enlightened, yes, so you open the Buddhist scriptures with a presupposition, with an expectation of inspiration, but it's not enough just to have that expectation and convince yourself that you are inspired when in fact you are not. You have actually to feel that there is something higher here which you are receiving - then you make a right use of those scriptures.

But you apply whatever the Buddha says in the Buddhist scriptures to the needs of your own personal development. You don't have to accept it just because it's there in the scriptures and the Buddha is supposed to be enlightened, regardless of how you actually feel about what the Buddha says. You must actually feel, you must actually experience, its relevance to your own needs, otherwise you can just quietly put it aside. It's not that you reject it, you just leave it aside. It's not relevant to your needs.

So this is all perhaps bound up with the other famous teaching of the Buddha's: that the Dharma is a raft [Majjhima Nikaya i.135, tr.]. And this applies to the written Dharma, the Dharma in the form of the scriptures, it's all only a raft, it's a means to an end. It's meant to help the individual to evolve. It's not something that the individual has to accept en bloc because it's divinely inspired or divinely revealed.

So the Buddha says nor upon what is in the scripture. One is not to accept something simply because it is to be found in a scripture, in a text, that people generally or a group of people regard as an infallible authority. You can disagree, and as a Buddhist you are free to disagree with the Buddha if you want to, but you'd better be careful how you do it because if you find yourself disagreeing with the Buddha, well, it could be that you're wrong! But there's no punishment even so.

All right, "Nor upon surmise". What is this surmise? It's takkahetu. Here we're going to get into not exactly difficulties but into ambiguities. I think we'd better treat the next two together, there's takkahetu and nayahetu. Both takka and naya mean something like thought, something like reason, something like logic. I say something like because the meaning is in fact a little bit vague. I'll just look [70] something up. (pause)

Abhaya: You said there are two words?

S: Yes, there is the word takkahetu and nayahetu.

Abhaya: Takkahetu is translated surmise and nayahetu as axiom.

S: Yes, another translation gives you quite different versions. The first it translates as "because of logic merely" and the second as "because of its method". Hetu is something like ground. I'm just looking up something else and then we'll really go into it. Because this is the most, in a way, ambiguous and difficult part of these ten points that the Buddha makes.

Let's first of all get the literal meanings. The second one first. Nayahetu. Nayahetu literally means "through inference". I take it you know what inference means.

Abhaya: From a set of propositions you come to a conclusion. Inference is not directly testable.

S: It's not quite like that. Usually inference is - you infer say the presence of B from the presence of A because you know that A and B are invariably associated, at least within the range of your experience are invariably associated. A classic illustration is when you see smoke you infer the existence of fire on the principle: no smoke without fire. Of course, there are certain exceptional circumstances under which you get smoke without fire, so this involves what is called the conditions of valid inference, but that's the rough idea: that inferential knowledge is not direct knowledge. You don't actually see the fire, you only see the smoke, but from the presence of the smoke which you do see you infer the presence of the fire which you do not see.

Subhuti: The inference doesn't necessarily follow from the...

S: Well, the inference is as necessary as the connection between those two things. So this is

why under the heading of the conditions of valid inference you have to examine what are called the invariable concomitants of two particular things. You have to be quite sure that the two things which are the subject matter of your inference are in fact invariably and exclusively found together. But usually it works for most practical purposes. For instance, you might become very accustomed to seeing two people together so when you see one of them you infer that the other one must be around somewhere, but actually that may not be a valid inference because the other person might have died in the interval. Do you see what I mean? So you have to draw the limits of valid inference.

Alan: Inference doesn't imply causal connection?

S: It doesn't imply necessarily causal connection, no. It may because a certain effect may invariably follow from certain causes or may only follow from certain causes. If smoke only follows from fire, well, then you could be quite sure that your inference of fire from the perception of smoke was valid under all circumstances, but it is not the case that smoke always results from fire and results only from fire so that you could never have [71] smoke under any other circumstances. That is not so. Therefore there are limitations to that particular inference. But anyway, it's clear now what one is talking about in this connection, what the Buddha is saying: that inference is not something that you can go by absolutely. This, I think, has been sufficiently obvious from what we've said so far. But of course a great deal of logic consists of inference, doesn't it? In fact you could say that logic is concerned to a great extent with the conditions for the making of a valid inference.

\_\_\_: Is empiricism a kind of inference?

S: Yes, but empiricism consists in collecting data, collecting particular instances, and then trying to reach conclusions from surveying those particular instances. There are various flaws in that because the validity of your conclusion depends upon - among other things - the number of instances required to establish a particular point. Again there are quite a few rules to be observed or laws to be observed. So one could take this nayahetu as standing for logic in the ordinary sense. The Buddha is saying that you cannot take logic, you cannot take rational thought that is to say, as an infallible criterion.

This is nayahetu. Takka can also be used in the sense of logic. We'll come to that in a minute. This is where part of the ambiguity comes in. Naya comes from nayati which is to lead. Naya is leading. Therefore a method, therefore a plan, therefore inference, therefore logical thought or rational thought in general.

So the Buddha is saying that one cannot go by this. You cannot accept inference as the criterion of what is to be accepted. What is to be accepted cannot be established exclusively by logical means. All right, let's go on to the other one now.

Nagabodhi: Before we do could you give a practical example of somebody making an inference with regard to the scriptures or spiritual teaching which wouldn't be right? I understand the theory but I can't quite get my mind round the practical.

S: Why the scriptures? We've gone on from the scriptures now. Do you see what I mean?

Nagabodhi: Okay, making an invalid inference about the spiritual life.

S: Well I hear a voice, it must be the voice of God. That is an example isn't it?

Nagabodhi: You'd infer from the lack of somebody you could see.

S: Yes, I don't see anybody, there isn't any person, there's no one in the room with me. I hear a voice, it must be God or at least it must be an angel. This would be an example of invalid inference.

Subhuti: Or even: I found the scriptures to be true in the past therefore they must be true.

S: Yes. I found them to be true with regard to past situations so therefore they must continue to hold good for the future.

Nagabodhi: But what about: this man seems to lead a thoroughly worthwhile life therefore he must be fit to teach me. He must be [72] spiritually developed. Isn't there some validity in making that sort of link?

S: I'm not saying that Buddhism itself doesn't make use of inferential reason. The Buddha is shown in the suttas as making use of inferential reasoning, for instance with regard to the existence of the Unconditioned in the Aryapariyesana Sutta, but of course one could say that was before his enlightenment. So it is not that we may not have to make use of inferential reasoning, it is not that we may not have to use it provisionally, but we cannot absolutely depend upon it. We may be forced into a situation in which we've no alternative but to rely upon inferential reasoning, but if it does let us down we mustn't be surprised. So we cannot take inferential reasoning as an absolute authority. It may be useful to a limited extent, for certain practical purposes, even within the spiritual life, but no more than that. We cannot make the living of the spiritual life dependent upon the absolute truth of a whole series of infallible syllogisms.

Manjuvajra: This is actually I suppose one of the kind of authorities we still do use a lot, in our own classes, in our own discussions with people.

S: Give an example.

Manjuvajra: Well I suppose a standard one is someone says, well, I don't actually see you can get anything out of this meditation. I can only say: well, I have and therefore because I have and you're a human being like me you can.

S: Yes.

Manjuvajra: We can say things like the kind of communities that we live in have been useful and have been shown to work.

S: Yes. What you say will be likely to be true but there is no absolute certainty. If you could be sure that the other person was a human being in exactly the same way that you are a human being, well, then you could be certain that that inference would be proved correct. But, after all, he's only approximately the same sort of human being as you, that may well be enough, but there may be something in his history which you are quite unaware of which makes him completely different as a human being from you, and therefore because of that that the

meditation in that way, under those circumstances, that particular kind of meditation, may not work for him as for you. Your inference will be proved wrong because your assumption was wrong. He was more different as a human being from you than you had realized. He seemed more like you than he actually was. Had he been as like you as he seemed, well, then, yes, your inference would have been correct. But we've very little else to go on very often, apart from our own sort of sense of the situation, our feeling, our intuition. Even the Buddha couldn't be sure. We know that from the scriptures. The Buddha made mistakes with disciples. We find that in the scriptures, at least in his earlier years as a Buddha. (laughter)

So there's no absolute certainty. The closest we can come to any sort of certainty we'll see towards the end of the whole passage. So inferential reasoning is useful in quite a large number of situations, and very often we can be quite reasonably sure of something on the basis of inferential reasoning, but there cannot [73] be absolute certainty attached. So we mustn't expect that kind of certainty. But, yes, we have to make use of inferential reasoning. We can hardly get along without it, imperfect though it is. It's good enough for quite a lot of practical purposes.

Anyway, takka. It is takkahetu. This is a little bit more ... this is literally doubt. No, that isn't quite literally. The etymology of it is interesting. It's literally something like turning and twisting and it's connected - or it can be compared with - the Latin *intricare*, a trick or a puzzle; also Sanskrit *tarku*, a bobbin, a spindle. Even it's connected perhaps with *torqueo*, torture, turn. So it's doubt, doubtful view, hairsplitting, hairsplitting reasoning, sophistry. You see the sort of connections.

Probably it can be taken as the equivalent of *nayahetu*, *takkahetu* can, it can be taken in the sense of inference, going according to inference, rational thought, but since the two are mentioned separately one has, as it were, to assign a distinctive meaning to *takkahetu*. It seems to mean something more like sophistry.

[end of tape 4, start of tape 5]

S: What is sophistry. How would you define sophistry?

Alan: Sort of smart reasoning.

S: It's sort of smart reasoning that isn't really valid but that people can be impressed by. You've probably all met the sort of plausible person who can adduce all sorts of apparently convincing reasons but if you look into them closely they're not really very convincing at all. So this is sophistry. So one should not go by sophistry. One should not allow oneself to be carried away by brilliant, apparently rational arguments put apparently convincingly. But *takkahetu* can be rendered as ground for doubt, because *takka* can mean just doubt. So what does this mean? It's as though the Buddha is saying that where there is thought there is doubt. It's as though rational certainty is very difficult to attain.

Have you ever listened to any of these radio discussion programmes where a number of different people give their views on different topics? And have you ever had the experience that when the first person speaks you find it quite convincing and you're inclined to agree; the second person speaks and says something quite different but it's equally convincing and you're equally inclined to agree; then somebody else gives his opinion and differs completely

from the previous two and you find that quite acceptable and you're inclined to agree with that as well? Do you see what I mean? So in this sense you could say that thinking is doubting. It's almost as though there can't be any sort of definite certain thinking. It's as though thinking is always doubtful. It's very difficult to arrive at any final certainty through thought.

So it's as though if there are rational grounds for believing something, at the same time there are rational grounds for doubting something. The two go together. If someone can find a reason for something, somebody else can find a reason against that. So on that account *takka* is doubt. To have inferential grounds for believing something or stating something is also to have grounds for doubting that thing, because the fact [74] that you've entered the realm of thinking at all means you've entered the realm of doubting because you've entered the realm of alternative thinking.

Alan: It's a bit like the Chinese yin-yang. Everything contains the seed of its opposite.

S: One could look at it like that.

Clive: When it comes down to actual application, say you think about something and you think about a way to do it. You think about your way to do it but someone can also go completely against that or show up where that falls down but in practical terms you have to do it so presumably you do it with the knowledge that it could be done differently.

S: Yes. If you want to have infallibly certain theoretical knowledge first and then act, that's impossible. In all action, therefore, there is an element of risk because there's an element of ignorance and an element of uncertainty. In other words, for everything that you do in a sense, in a manner of speaking, you require faith; you cannot know in advance for certain how anything is going to turn out because there are so many unknown factors. The situation is always a little different from what it was before. Even when you are knocking a nail in you can't be certain that this nail is going to go into the wall in exactly the same way that the previous nail went in because you may have come to a slightly harder spot in the wall, or the nail may be just that little bit softer so that it bends, or you may not give exactly the same blow with exactly the same degree of weight behind it so you don't get exactly the same result; you can't rely upon that. You might have knocked a hundred nails in quite successfully in exactly the same way apparently, but you can't be certain that that hundred and first nail is going to go in in exactly the same way, even such a simple thing as that.

Clive: In the context of a co-op situation, when somebody has an idea of what to do or the way to do something and someone else doesn't like that then someone else has got another idea and someone else has got another idea - it so often happens.

S: Well, you have to sort things out rationally as best you can first and then act upon the idea which seems to be best, but whether it is actually the best will usually be found only in the course of actually carrying it out. Of course sometimes you may be able to carry out only one idea. You may not be able to carry out all three ideas and then compare the results. So sometimes you will never know whether the idea which was put into operation was actually the best. There is that possibility too.

So complete certainty through rational means is impossible to attain and therefore we usually go along making some use of reason and logic and quite a bit of use of sort of rule of thumb

and our own experience and intuition of things and manage in that sort of way, but there's no question of absolute certainty. You have to live with uncertainty. If we're experienced in a particular field the area of uncertainty can be cut down, it can be reduced quite drastically, so perhaps for most practical purposes there isn't even an area of uncertainty, but we mustn't rely upon that.

Manjuvajra: In the work I've been doing - which is sort of scientific work - whenever you make a statement you have to put after it a [75] number which refers to how certain that statement is probably true. So there's a formal test which tells you the degree of certainty which you can expect that statement to be true.

Nagabodhi: Standard deviation.

Subhuti: Certain probability. It's a question of probability rather than certainty.

S: And there are degrees of probability even. So it means that our subjective feeling of certainty in any given situation, certainty that things will turn out in one way rather than in another is never absolutely objectively justified, or perhaps one should modify even that - in situations beyond a certain degree of complexity.

So therefore the Buddha is saying nor upon surmise, nor upon an axiom. Well this isn't a very satisfactory translation. The other translation says or because of logic merely or because of its method. The two terms takkahetu and nayahetu seem interchangeable to some extent, but in both cases the Buddha is drawing attention to the fact that rational thought, logical thought, inference, cannot be regarded as an absolutely infallible criterion for the truth of any statement.

Vajradaka: I don't know very much about them but do the Christian Science movement have a strong reliance on inference or rational thought with regard to their religious belief?

S: I couldn't say. I mean all religious traditions make use of inference to some degree but in the case of theistic religions their ultimate authority is of course the divinely revealed scripture, and the Christian Scientists have a scripture which Mrs Mary Baker Eddy [wrote], the Key to the Scriptures or whatever, but whether they regard that as infallible in the same way that Christians usually regard the Bible I don't know.

All right, I think we have come to coffee time.

I was just going to say that it is quite a salutary experience to read a critical work on logic. You realize then what a highly problematic process the process of logic really is. You end up wondering whether such a thing is possible at all, especially when you read some of the modern critiques of traditional deductive and inductive logic, especially deductive logic. I've mentioned this in my memoirs. When I was at Benares Hindu university I read some works on logic and especially F.C.S. Schiller's 'Formal Logic' which is a radical empiricist critique of traditional formal logic, mainly deductive logic, and the so-called laws of thought. It's really very interesting, very entertaining also. [In The Rainbow Road, p.433, Bhante says it was "undoubtedly one of the most hilarious books I had ever encountered," tr.]

\_\_\_: is it difficult?

S: I didn't find it difficult, no. (laughter) But it's a very entertaining work. I think as books on logic go it is not so difficult. I've not seen it since, I'm afraid, but I assume it is available in libraries.

Clive: Do you think that learning the techniques of thought and being able to think logically, in other words mastering thought, helps you to see the limitations of thought?[76]

S: Yes, I think the main point is - the main value of the study of these sort of works is - that you are able to recognize when you are not thinking logically. It's not so much that the study of books like this enables you to think logically, but they enable you to see through the illogicalities of your own thinking as well as - of course - those of other people, and they enable you to understand much better the extent to which your so-called thinking is guided or directed or inspired by your emotions or your general outlook upon life rather than by rational consideration of the actual subject in hand.

Alan: De Bono in his books on lateral thinking describes logical thinking as just linear thinking. He puts forward a whole alternative of lateral thinking which is completely different from Aristotelean logic. You sort of go in leaps.

S: Well, logical thinking tries to connect every stage of the process irrefutably with the preceding stage and to establish a sort of iron chain of logical reasoning on which you can absolutely depend.

Clive: Where does lateral thinking differ?

S: I think with linear thinking.

Clive: How does lateral thinking compare with logical?

S: The term is used metaphorically, I'm not sure how it's used by modern writers in this sort of connection but it's presumably taking into consideration factors other than the purely logical ones, even taking into account things like emotions.

Subhuti: It's associative rather than strictly logical - the connection between ideas in lateral thinking.

Alan: Lateral thinking seems to take into account everything. It's not logical.

S: This is where the emotional element comes in because why should you take it into consideration at all if it doesn't logically follow in the linear way? It's because you've got some sort of emotional interest in it, because when you sort of freely associate you don't freely associate with everything. You only freely associate with those things in which you are subjectively interested, so it's your subjective interest or the emotional factor which is the link in the lateral thinking.

Alan: It's lateral thinking that points out that there are other valid ways of looking at things rather than just using Aristotelean logic.

S: Ah, but then to use the word valid itself is in a way Aristotelean! (laughter)

Alan: Useful then.

Clive: Is there a lateral thinking process or system? Can you say what its characteristics are?

Alan: No, I don't think there are. I mean hunch is lateral thinking. Edward de Bono has written several books which are available in Penguin on the whole subject of lateral thinking. He's [77] the person who's really made the phrase well known. He just deals with the whole thing, that there are ways of looking at things that aren't logical but are still useful.

Clive: Presumably if you think something out logically and then you know that you can't take into account the irrational in that thinking you can sort of fill in the gaps with lateral thinking.

S: Well, this is usually what people do. Most people's thinking isn't strictly linear. It's a very sort of rough and ready combination of the linear and the lateral in practice. It's only probably in science that one approximates to linear thinking to any extent.

Clive: If you were thinking about something properly then you'd think about it logically as far as you could and then from that point you'd use lateral thinking.

S: Or the other way round. Sometimes you start with the lateral thinking. In a sense you start with the hunch and you follow it up logically. But I think that all the way along the line you supplement your logical linear thinking with lateral thinking but you're very often not conscious of the fact. You think that you are thinking logically but actually you are not.

Alan: Often the logical thinking is actually rationalization. You arrive at your conclusion and then try to rationalize it as logical thinking.

Subhuti: So what this amounts to is it's all right to think logically, it's all right to use other means to arrive at your conclusions, but just don't sort of deify logical thinking.

S: Right, yes, yes.

Subhuti: This happens with science doesn't it? Science is invoked as a sort of infallible authority because scientists say something it's true. It's taken as infallibly so.

Surata: The media do this to us all the time. On news reports they always bring in a scientist to sort of tell you the facts.

S: Well it comes into Buddhism or at least some people try to bring it into Buddhism, that Buddhism must be true because it's scientific. This is what Nagabodhi was getting at in a recent newsletter. It's again invoking an authority. Again in another way, well, Buddhism must be true because Buddhism agrees with what's taught in the Bible, you know, that Buddhism is true because it's the same as Christianity and you know that Christianity is true of course!

[coffee break]

Clive: Could you say that the most complete thinking man is a sort of balance of lateral and logical...?

S: This brings up the question of what does one mean by thinking. There is a definition - or a description at least - by D.H. Lawrence that I've quoted before, that thinking is the whole man wholly attending. I sometimes think there's a little bit more than that, but anyway roughly that. Man in his wholeness wholly attending or something like that.[D.H. Lawrence: "Thought", in Selected Poems, Penguin, p.227. Also quoted more fully in Kamalashila, Meditation, p.47, tr.] [78]

Clive: At the same time as thinking logically you're also thinking laterally, not that you think logically then laterally or laterally then logically.

S: Well, one could say that logic is an abstraction from the actual process of thinking. One could say that the so-called lateral procedure is an abstraction from what actually happens, that both are going on one could say even in a sort of integrated way all the time and they cannot - one's concrete experience - be actually separated. One just thinks with more or less degree of clarity and directedness.

Clive: Does it help you to identify the different aspects of thinking, to help you see what thinking is?

S: It probably does.

Subhuti: In a way it's like a fine dividing line between subject and object, a shifting dividing line between subject and object, isn't it? The more objective is the more rational.

S: The more objective is the more rational. The more subjective is the more, well, non-rational. But it does seem to me - taking up this whole question of thinking and coming to conclusions in connection with what we were talking about yesterday, for instance - one would have thought that more people would have been attracted by, say, the FWBO than actually are. It's as though if they'd thought logically about it, well, the conclusion's obvious. But then people don't think only logically, they don't think only rationally. They 'think' - inverted commas - irrationally. So what is it that actually guides people or what is it that actually directs them? What is it that actually makes them behave or act in a certain way. What is it that they are acting upon?

\_\_\_: Generally, desires.

S: One could say generally desires, but I think it's more than that actually in the case of a human being; I think it's more complex. It seems to me as though what they're actually doing is working out or exploring what one can only describe as a gestalt. It's as though there is in them, sort of imminent, a sort of gestalt which they are in process of working out and giving external expression to. On a larger scale, in a different sort of way, it's as though people are in pursuit of a myth. One can't help noticing how very quickly people latch on to a myth and it's as though their thinking is in a sense basically mythical rather than rational. Do you see what I mean?

To give an example, well, I've mentioned in the past a couple of myths which have motivated a lot of people and which rationally speaking are quite false. One was the anti-Semitic myth, the myth of the international Jewish conspiracy. You probably have heard about that, which found expression in what are now known to be the forged so-called Protocols of the Elders of

Zion, supposedly the minutes of a secret meeting of highly influential Jews to plot the downfall of the gentile world, and these so-called Protocols are circulated by anti-Semitic agencies still. You can still get hold of them. They are still being read and believed. People are still latching on to this sort of anti-Semitic material. this myth of the [79] international Jewish conspiracy.

Another myth is the feminist myth of the universal oppression of woman by man. If you look at the historical evidence you don't really find any such thing. Well, even if you do find oppression of woman by man it's balanced by oppression of man by woman so the two even out. (laughter) But a lot of women catch on to this myth in an uncritical sort of credulous way and it's a sort of driving force of a great part of the feminist movement. In the same way with Christianity. What really keeps Christianity going? It's not its ethical teaching, which is sometimes excellent - it's its myth of the slain God who was resurrected and who went back to heaven and who takes his followers with him. That's what gives Christianity its real appeal, that myth.

So people are moved by myth. They're not moved by rational considerations. So one has, as it were, to find, if one can speak in those terms at all, a true myth - in a way it's a contradiction in terms - well, let's say a valid myth, a positive myth, a myth which is capable of being lived out creatively in a way which the anti-Semitic myth and the feminist myth are not capable of being lived out creatively. Or perhaps the Christian myth is not capable of being lived out creatively, not fully creatively anyway. One needs a myth that people can latch on to. A myth involves their - well, one can't say just their emotions, it involves all of them, it involves their imagination, even though in a weak way or on a low level.

Manjuvajra: You can't latch on to a myth - you've got to believe it to be real.

S: Yes, you can't really go around looking for a myth, a true myth. You have to respond to the myth and if there is something deeply negative and unhealthy in you you'll respond to this deeply negative and unhealthy myth like the anti-Semitic myth. If there is something very positive and healthy in you you'll respond to a positive and healthy myth. If you've got a thing going about pain and blood and suffering and guts and death, well, then you'll respond to the myth of the crucifixion. (laughter)

A woman came to see me once. She had a great thing about pain and all that kind of thing, and suffering, and she was looking through all my books, and after looking through them she asked if she could borrow one, and the book that she wanted to borrow was a work of modern Japanese Christian theology called 'The myth of the pain of God'. There were all these other works on Buddhism and she wasn't interested in those. She was a Buddhist by birth actually - a Burmese woman - but anyway it was this pain of God that attracted her, that God suffers. But the myth is very ... the gestalt is like a little sort of personal individual fragment of myth almost.

I'm not expressing myself very rationally or very logically here, perhaps intentionally, but do you see what I mean? People are trying to work out not an idea but there's a sort of gestalt behind them of which they are an expression in part and they're trying to work it out in everything that they do, and they bring in reason, they bring in the rational, they bring in the irrational. It also helps them to work out, to explore by working out, to experience this gestalt which is, as it were, behind them which you could say is perhaps the unworked-out samskaras

brought over from previous lives. One could look at it in those terms or perhaps that is an aspect of [80] it.

Abhaya: Are you saying that this is the way that you think that people operate, therefore it's a good idea that they find a positive myth if that's the way they behave, or are you saying that you believe that this is how all of us are? Are you excepting yourself from this and thinking it's not really...?

S: No, I think this is how people usually operate. I think this is what actually happens, and therefore in teaching the Dharma, in trying to spread the Dharma, we have to take this into consideration.

Abhaya: Do you think it's not really a good thing? You just accept it because it's a fact, you think it's not a good thing? I get the impression that I can't be sure what you're saying about it yourself.

S: Ah, no, from the examples that I've given I think it's clear that it CAN be a good thing and it can NOT be a good thing, because one can have what I've described as a negative myth, a myth that does not conduce to the development of the individual but nonetheless has a powerful appeal, and one can also have a positive myth. I'm sort of improvising terminology here. I've not really thought it out properly.

Abhaya: Do you think like the individual finding himself is like getting this myth more and more clear and expressing it more fully in his life?

S: Yes, I've referred to the gestalt in that connection. Perhaps the gestalt is a sort of small scale myth, it's your personal myth, it's your myth about yourself perhaps.

\_\_\_: Could you say what you mean by gestalt?

S: A gestalt is a whole as distinct from a part. A gestalt exists in a way outside space and outside time, but you have to express it in space and in time which means that you can't express it all at once - you can't express all of it at once in time or even in space. You draw out a little bit of it at a time. It sort of unrolls, as it were. Do you see what I mean? You're trying to express, say, in terms of two dimensions what is really three dimensional.

One for instance feels this when one is writing. Maybe I'll give first of all an example from music. It is said - I read somewhere - that Mozart before he wrote a symphony experienced the whole symphony in one instant but then he had to write it down seriatim, that is to say serially, with one part coming after another, but actually he experienced it as a totality. That totality is the gestalt which you proceed to unroll in time, that is the working out. So sometimes it's like that when you are writing. When you are writing really well you're not going from this bit to that bit - you experience the gestalt the whole time, and you unroll it in the writing, and that's when you feel inspired.

Clive: You could say that the experience of the gestalt is your vision.

S: You could say that, yes. Vision implies something which you see out there in front of you. The way I've been talking so far [81] it's as though the gestalt is behind you but you can think

of it as behind you and pushing you; you can think of it as in front of you and pulling you. It comes to much the same thing. When it's behind you it's as though you're not so conscious of it, you become conscious of it only in the course of the rolling out process. When it's in front of you as your vision, you're much more conscious of it. You see it more clearly.

In this connection, the connection of the myth, I remember - I've mentioned this before - on an early retreat I noticed the way in which people got absorbed drawing their own pictures of the wheel of life. I don't know even if Subhuti was around then, Abhaya might have been around then. It was a very early retreat at Quartermain and I was giving a talk and I was talking about the wheel of life. I drew one on the blackboard and I said to them maybe you'd like to make a copy and I noticed they spent a whole hour and a half quite happily absorbed just making a copy of this wheel of life, which was comparatively new to people then and they were absorbed in a really childlike sort of way, in a way that they hadn't been absorbed in the words of the talk that I'd been giving, and it was clear to me then that this image, this symbol, even if you like this myth, this gestalt, had a sort of appeal which was much deeper than the rational.

So it's as though we have to take these factors into consideration, introduce people, as it were, to myths. You can't sort of choose your myth rationally. You've either got your myth or you haven't. You either respond or you don't. There are some powerful symbols in Buddhist teaching and in the FWBO teaching like the wheel of life, the spiral, the mandala of the five Buddhas, and people do respond to these, they do respond to this sort of archetypal material, it moves them quite powerfully. But we haven't yet, as it were, created a myth which is distinctive to the movement. It might emerge. If it does it will help us very much but it hasn't emerged as yet. Perhaps it's in the making still. After all, thirteen years is a very short time.

Clive: Are you saying that we could develop our own symbolism in the Movement.

S: No, I'm speaking in a sense in bigger terms than that. I'm speaking more in terms of myth. What is a myth? A myth is a symbolical story, it's a whole story, every detail of which is symbolical one could say or has a symbolic meaning, whereas a symbol is just one particular object or article or form that has a meaning on another level or sets up a certain kind of response. A myth is a whole story.

\_\_\_: It's a whole world view.

S: A whole world view even, yes.

Clive: In a way that, say, William Blake had vision and then he developed symbolism as a part of that vision, you're saying the Movement would do something like that, that type of thing, develop a whole...

S: No, I'm thinking perhaps more in terms of the Movement dramatizing itself as a myth so that to get involved with the Movement is not just to get involved with an organization or a spiritual movement but to get involved with a myth and become part of that myth and be able to act out within that your own myth or your own gestalt. [82] This is what I'm saying.

Nagabodhi: It's a way of enlarging, amplifying...

S: Yes. The Gnostics were very good at this. They had these vast, complicated myths in

which you could get involved. There's a little bit of that, say, in the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra. We mentioned the Nichirenite people. There's a little bit of that in connection with the book of Revelations in the Bible. For instance, the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra represents a sort of myth - I think people realize that - and there are various figures, various characters appearing in this myth, and there are two characters appearing I think towards the end of the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra - one of them is a Bodhisattva called Vishishtacharitra who is described as living in the future because the myth of the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra spreads over past, present, and future - so there is mention of this Bodhisattva Vishishtacharitra who is yet to come. So the founder of the Nichiren school, Nichiren himself, identified himself with that Bodhisattva; in other words he affiliated himself to the myth. You see what I mean? He identified himself with this figure Vishishtacharitra and in that way became part of the whole myth which unfolds in the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra itself. In much the same way the Christian commentators on the Book of Revelations: some of them have tried to identify themselves with certain people mentioned. For instance, I think there's mention of two witnesses to the truth of the revelation or whatever. Does anyone remember all this? It's years since I read about it, but anyway people tried to identify themselves with various figures in the Book of Revelations in this way, and in that way they themselves become part of that myth. They are caught up in it and they're living it out, it becomes real for them, that is their framework of reference, that is their world view, and they are in it. They're not looking at the picture from outside, they are depicted in the picture.

So I think probably the FWBO will have a wide appeal, even a 'mass' - inverted commas - appeal, only when it, as I said, dramatizes itself as a myth which people can get caught up in in a positive way and within the framework of which they can live out their private myth, embody their gestalt.

[end of side, next side]

Clive: ... it is a myth. The myth is made up from the individuals concerned with it, made up from their own individual myths, and so any time someone comes in and starts living out their individual myth it changes the myth of the FWBO or enriches it.

S: It will enrich it because they will live out in their own way, within their own set of circumstances, the myth which the Movement as a whole is living out on a larger scale. Do you see what I mean?

Nagabodhi: Isn't there a danger in all this that, well, the myth gives easy access to the sort of unconscious forces, the irrational forces, but no matter how positive the myth, to the extent that it's effective and draws people effortlessly into [83] unconscious areas, do you not almost inevitably get problems because people are not integrated. Their involvement no matter how initially positive it might be isn't total...

S: But one gets problems already, and one of the biggest problems is that the unconscious energies are not involved.

Nagabodhi: I can't help feeling the sleep of reason brings forth monsters, that there's got to be balance, that it couldn't be a myth as total as say the Nazi myth.

S: Well, I used the contradictory expression 'true myth' which is a contradiction. I also

distinguished between positive myth and negative myth, very much off the cuff, as it were. This needs further exploration or further thought, but you can see what I'm getting at. I'm not saying myth as such. I feel a need to distinguish myth from myth, and one needs to be selective about one's myths, and I think if you are a positive person basically you'll be attracted by a positive myth, not by a negative myth. There are some myths that can attract or interest or fascinate or involve only quite sick and negative people.

Manjuvajra: But the Nazi myth is a good myth. (laughter)

S: No, no, no, you've changed the myth now. I spoke of the anti-Semitic myth which overlaps with the Nazi myth - yes.

Manjuvajra: The actual Nazi myth itself is really good.

S: Well, what is that myth according to you? (laughter)

Manjuvajra: Of the growth of man, that man can develop himself to be a superman.

Nagabodhi: An aryan man.

Manjuvajra: An aryan man, yes, to be more than he is at the moment, that all the energy went into that. That was the myth really, but because it was dealt with on a kind of mythic level by people who didn't really ... who weren't really consciously involved in developing themselves but they still got caught up in... It's as though the kind of the vision of the developing man inspired a whole nation but they weren't consciously actually involved with it and so that could be manipulated.

S: I would describe that particular myth as a false myth, because it started off from false racial premises, that is to say, it thought of aryan man not as a spiritual concept as in Buddhism, but definitely as a biological concept, and that led to the purification of the Germanic blood, etc. etc. and purification meant from the Semitic taint. But I would say that that was a false myth which could be exploded on purely scientific grounds.

Nagabodhi: It's a bit like in the same way Christianity made the mistake of combining myth with history. They combined myth with geography and biology. If you're going to have myth it must be pure myth.

S: Right, yes.

Nagabodhi: It should have absolutely no link with rationality.[84]

S: With the conditioned, with the mundane.

Nagabodhi: With the mundane.

Subhuti: There must be no confusion between them.

S: This is why our Buddhist myths are very much way up in the sky, which is good. That's where myths ought to be, in a way, because then you can be way up in the sky. Perhaps it is

really a great advantage that, in Buddhism, Pali Buddhism came first for want of a better term. The early teachings such as we are studying here are very down to earth, are very practical. In a way up to a point are quite rational. All the later myth came with the Mahayana. So it's clearly separate. It's clearly up in the sky and we can accept the myth quite happily and say, well no, that was not the personal teaching of the Buddha. The historical Gotama Buddha did not teach the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, it was later collaboration, a myth dreamt up by later generations of disciples. The mistake of the Nichiren people is that they take it quite literally as it purports to be, on the face of it, the actual teaching of Gotama Buddha, which is nonsense. It transcends that sort of framework of historical reference.

So we can keep quite separate our historical Buddhism, the sort of Dharma that we're practising on the ordinary every day level, and our archetypal imaginings. We can keep these two things quite separate.

Nagabodhi: Does that then not militate a bit against what you said originally of our needing a myth that in some ways links up with the history of the Movement?

S: I didn't say that it was necessarily linked up with the history. I said that the Movement itself was a dramatization of that. It may be linked up with the history, it may not, it's difficult to say. But it must be an embodiment - so to speak - of what I've called a true myth, a positive myth, and which I would perhaps now describe as a transcendental myth. Not a myth with roots on the earth in blood and geography and tribe and all the rest of it as the Germanic myths were.

Manjuvajra: So you're not actually talking about making the Movement in a way identical with the stage of the myth, you're not saying that the kind of myth is enacted within our movement.

S: Well, in a way. You could say that actually this is happening in a way. What is our myth? Our myth is the Pure Land, and we're actually trying to embody the Pure Land first of all in the Movement so that the Movement here on earth is the Pure Land under certain definite conditions, and we're trying to spread that Pure Land in the form of the New Society. That is the myth of which the Movement represents the working out.

Vajradaka: You could see that quite clearly after you gave that talk "Building the Buddha Land", how people's mythological side was fired in a practical sense. We're going out on a retreat, then, right, we're going to go and build a Buddha Land in Auckland or whatever. The two became synthesised in a way, or infused each other.

S: Well, perhaps it will take that direction. I think it's [85] quite impossible to say. It may be a sort of false start. The myth may not take that form. It may not be that particular myth. We probably can't work it out rationally. Perhaps we shouldn't try to, but that could be an example of the sort of thing that one has in mind.

Subhuti: Has the area of the rational and the mythic always been clearly distinguished in Buddhist history, apart from, say, in the Nichiren case?

S: I would say, in effect, yes. If one takes Buddhism as a whole. Some forms of Buddhism, say the modern Theravada, are blind to the mythical; some forms of Buddhism, say some

aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, are blind to the historical. But if we see Buddhism as a whole, as Western Buddhists we can do justice to all these developments. We can see the tremendous value and advantage of the more historical type of Buddhism, and we can see the tremendous value and advantage of the more mythical type of Buddhism, for want of a better term. Christianity had myth from the beginning; Buddhism has not had myth from the beginning and that's a great advantage.

Subhuti: It does seem that the historical sense is quite a recent development in civilization.

S: Not altogether. The Greeks had an historical sense.

Alan: The Chinese.

S: The Chinese.

Subhuti: But they confused the historical with the mythic didn't they? For instance they had the (?) heroes.

S: That's true. I suppose they were in principle historically-minded but they did need to develop the sort of tools of research that we have now in order to be able, in actual fact, to sort out the historical from the mythical.

Subhuti: But they were in principle unable to do so.

S: They had a sense of the distinction. For instance, there was the theory quite early on that the gods were deified dead heroes: Ehuemerism. But that showed the sort of rudiments of scientific thinking in that sort of way.

Clive: So in order to... First of all you have a myth which has no earthly connection, let's say, but then it's a question of making that myth actual. By using what? Symbols?

S: The myth itself, one can say, consists of symbols. One can say that there is a sort of - well we've been talking so far in terms of two things or two levels which we call the historical and the mythic. One could say that actually there are three. There is the historical, there is the mythical which you could also call the archetypal, and the absolute. The symbols are part of the mythical or the archetypal, and the mythical and the archetypal mediates so to speak between the absolute and the historical, and this sort of corresponds to your three kayas. The Absolute is the dharmakaya level. The mythical and archetypal is the sambhogakaya level, and the historical is the [86] nirmanakaya level.

It's as though - human nature being what it is - you cannot translate what we might call absolute truth directly into historical terms. It needs to go through the mythical and the symbolic. That's why people are moved by myths and symbols rather than by rational statements usually.

Clive: How does one go about creating first of all a personal myth? Do you sit down and write a story? Is that the type of approach? A complete thing?

S: I don't think it's a question of sort of creating one, in a sense, because it's already there. The

gestalt is there, and one is in fact working that out all the time. So what actually it is a question of is sort of clarifying to oneself by studying, say, one's whole life or one's life so far, what that gestalt is and even, one might say, clarifying and improving and making more positive the gestalt itself.

It's like for instance if you, say, study your life you might see a certain pattern emerging in the sense that there's a certain pattern that repeats itself over and over again. So that suggests that on perhaps a lower sort of psychological level you're just working something out. So by sort of seeing the way in which you tend to repeat a certain pattern you can learn something about yourself and in this way you get back to the gestalt behind you which is making you behave in that sort of way, which is of course still you, and you can recognize it and work on it or improve it if that is required.

Nagabodhi: Is this, in a way ... through meditation you progressively come in contact with a wider and wider gestalt which eventually sort of includes everything.

S: Well, you can have, for instance to begin with, a sort of vision of oneself as one would like to become. You can say, well, that was your gestalt, that was your personal myth, that was your ideal. For instance, you can, say, do a visualization of Manjusri or a visualization of Vajrapani and feel, well, that's your personal myth, that's your gestalt. It's that that you want to work out in your life. But it isn't enough for the ideal to be conceived just in sort of abstract philosophical terms; it isn't enough for it to be even visualized in that way; you've got to establish the emotional connections, and the myth in the stricter sense, or the symbol, establishes the emotional connections. That is the important thing.

Clive: We already have symbolism. We already have that archetypal ... but are you saying that we develop something which we can relate to more emotionally?

S: Yes. Because you say we have the symbolism, but what do we mean by having it? Well, it's there - say - the pictures on the wall, or we can do the visualization technically, but they're not necessarily really symbols or really myths for us in the sense of being really fully and powerfully and emotionally effective. They're still to a great extent just mentally realized, not emotionally realized, so that they're not really symbols for us. A symbol is not just something that you just have a picture of and - as I've said - put up on the wall. There's much more to it than that. It's only a symbol if we actually [87] respond to it, or it's only a symbol to the extent that we respond to it. So that means we have to establish very often all sorts of intermediate links from the things that we actually do feel, however sort of crude they may be, to more refined things, to more refined things which eventually link up with the archetypal, the ideal, or whatever, and make it more real to us.

Clive: Are you saying that you visualize a particular Buddha and then other practices would be working out each stage of you towards that ideal?

S. It isn't so much a question of practices but maybe a whole sort of network of associations. It's more like that.

Abhaya: It's like finding things inside yourself which will emotionally arouse you which are not necessarily directly related to the image you're visualizing but you've got to form a sort of bridge between your emotional state and the actual image, which is quite difficult to do isn't

it?

S: Right, yes.

Nagabodhi: Does that tie up with the sort of embellishment of the landscape in paintings of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva?

S: It could be, yes, right, because at least you've got some feeling for those things.

Clive: So the Buddha image is the highest of your archetypal symbols. You've got to sort of...

S: ...Work your way up to it through a whole series of archetypes, so to speak, or symbols. Those which are closest to you as you are at present will be comparatively gross, whereas those which are nearer - say the Buddha or Bodhisattva figure - will be comparatively much more refined, and you have to work your way through as you refine your own emotions.

So in other words we have to accept that the Buddha image or Bodhisattva image is not a symbol for us in more cases than not. It is not in fact a symbol for us. It's only a picture. Which is quite a different thing.

Clive: A symbol implies emotional relations.

S: Right. And not just an emotion but a very powerful one which engages your deeper energies.

Alan: Does that also imply that the Bodhisattva ideal is not for us?

S: Oh no, but it implies ... it's an ideal but when we use the word ideal we imply something which is conceived of mentally, but that is all it is at present. If the figure of the Bodhisattva is really a symbol for us it would move us powerfully emotionally and rouse and harness all our energies. But it doesn't do that; we just admire it as a pretty picture or conceive of it mentally as an abstract intellectual ideal. That's why I say the Buddha figure is not a symbol for us, the Bodhisattva figure is not a symbol for us. Not that it should not be or cannot be, but that as a matter of fact it is not a symbol for us. We do not regard it as a symbol and we don't regard it as a symbol because - that's obvious - because [88] it doesn't have the effect on us of a symbol, or as it would have if we did regard it as a symbol.

Abhaya: So it would seem like maybe possibly you've got to go through one's own cultural roots.

S: It would seem to be a conclusion.

Abhaya: You have to go through your own cultural roots before you can connect.

S: Right. I've been reading recently, for review purposes, a book on Tibetan Buddhism and a book on Mongolian Buddhism [Guiseppe Tucci, *The Religions of Tibet*, and Walter Heissig, *The Religions of Mongolia*, tr.] and it really is quite extraordinary the way in which the indigenous folk religious tradition was sort of incorporated and became a sort of channel for the energies of the Tibetans or the Mongolians leading them to some extent in the right

direction.

But we can't transplant - I've made this point in one of the reviews [FWBO Newsletter no. 47, p.13, tr.] - we can't transplant that particular synthesis, that synthesis of Indian Buddhism transplanted to Tibet with very distinctive Tibetan indigenous religious material. We can't transplant that en bloc to the West.

Abhaya: But we have done in the sense that that's the raw material we're all using. All the thangkas you've brought and all the ...

S: Oh no. No, it goes far beyond that. The thangkas go back to India. No. If you read these books these ethnic elements go far, far beyond that.

Abhaya: No, what I'm saying is that the raw material you have provided us with are all ... all have ... they're the fruits of particular cultural heritages aren't they? The image that you see of Manjughosa is because it's an image that's seen through Tibetan eyes or Indian eyes...

S: This is true, yes. But I'm thinking of something that goes beyond even that when I speak of these indigenous Tibetan folk elements, and some of the Tibetan groups are not just sort of using Indo-Tibetan thangkas, they go very far beyond that even to things like wearing Tibetan style robes and celebrating the Tibetan new year festival. You read, for instance, in one of the Tibetan Buddhism magazines, the legend of King Gesar, which has really got nothing to do with Buddhism at all, but the followers of these groups are given all this sort of material. They're trying to transplant the whole thing over here. Even things that they're building now, imitating Tibetan architecture and so on.

Clive: In a sense it seems that, at that level of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, that that symbolism is all right to use anyway. You know what I mean, that once you're able to relate to that symbol as a symbol it wouldn't matter what kind of symbol it was.

Subhuti: Cultural elements are relatively peripheral, actually, to those images aren't they, because the basic thing is the seated human being.

S: Like in Tibet they've incorporated, say, the cult of the snow mountains - it's a sort of integral part of Tibetan Buddhism, [89] but how are you going to transplant the cult of the snow mountains to England when we don't have any snow mountains? If some Tibetan groups had their way we'd be having a sort of snow mountain ceremony every year even in a place like Norfolk!

For Tibetans it has meaning. If you've got a snow mountain there, and you believe - for centuries before Buddhism came along - that gods inhabited those snow mountains, and if you further believe that those gods have become protectors of the Buddhist faith, it will all have meaning for you. But can you transplant that cult of Tibetan local deities - pre-Buddhistic ones, inhabiting Tibetan snow mountains - can you transplant that to the plains of Norfolk? Well, clearly it's impossible.

\_\_\_: They have been able to transplant snowy Christmases to Australia.

Alan: That's true.

S: Well, I've been in Christchurch, New Zealand, on Christmas Day some years ago when the temperature was about 110. It didn't feel like Christmas in the least, not in the least! (laughter) Because all the cultural trappings were just impossible. It was such a hot sunny day and we came back to the Centre for a light salad lunch. There was no question of Christmas pudding or anything like it. You couldn't have faced it on a day like that! So it's though Christmas didn't exist there. It's interesting to the extent that Christmas, the Christian festival of Christmas, is identified with certain Western social and cultural practices, the fact that Christmas evaporates in the atmosphere of New Zealand is quite interesting because it suggests that Christmas here in this country has lost any spiritual significance. It's purely a cultural thing.

Nagabodhi: Surely Christian New Zealanders do get into Christmas?

S: Well, I'm sure some of them must have gone to church but they don't seem to have developed their own feeling for Christmas in the way that some people have in the West, in Europe let's say. I didn't see any sign of it. I didn't see any Christmas trees or anything like that.

\_\_\_: They do have them.

S: They probably do try quite hard.

Alan: A lot of the symbols are still there. You still have Christmas cards with snowy scenes on them and Christmas trees.

S: Well you do have snow in some parts of New Zealand.

Alan: Not at Christmas time.

S: In some parts of New Zealand you have snow all the time, round the snow mountains, the Alps. (laughter)

Clive: If you're developing symbolism so that you can act out your myth, then you use historical events and geographical [90] situations to base them on. For instance, you had a May Day festival in the Lakes, and this became a Buddhist high point. That sort of thing.

S: No, what we were saying earlier was that your myth should be transcendental, it should come from above.

Clive: With no connection geographically or historically?

S: It can be worked out within a particular geographical and historical framework, but from the Buddhist point of view, from a maybe more spiritual point of view, it should not be tied down to any particular locale or any particular tribe or any particular race or any particular place. The instance I gave was that of the Pure Land which is a myth, which is a transcendental myth.

Sona: But you work up to that.

S: You work up to that.

Vajradaka: I'm quite interested in the contrast between experiencing myths in different ways, like in a literary sense, in a visual sense like in theatre, even doing it like with mime and things like that, or watching theatre, and on a practical level actually seeing your work in mythical terms, and how all these different aspects kind of interrelate. Do you think that it is important to put yourself in a position to create quite literary myths, or get in touch with literary myths?

S: You don't really create. It's there behind you or in front of you and you in the course of your life work that out for better or for worse depending on the nature of your particular myth, or your particular gestalt, which is driving you or is drawing you. What one has to do is to clarify that, make it as positive as one possibly can progressively, and to link it up with something of more universal significance and something very much more positive, because you can't approach the more spiritual myth or the more spiritual archetype all at once. You're not in a position to establish the necessary connections. But anyway, let's retrace our steps otherwise we're not going to get through what we ought to get through this morning.

How did we get on to this? The point was made that man is not just moved by rational considerations, he is moved by irrational considerations at least equally. In fact he is moved by symbol and by myth. In fact his whole life one could say is a living out of a personal myth. So we got on to that after considering the limitations of the purely rational approach, and the Buddha in fact had admonished us in this particular passage that one cannot go by the rational. The rational as represented by logic, by inference, is not an infallible criterion of what is to be accepted.

So, therefore, so far the Buddha has said - in the words of this translation - "Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing, nor upon tradition, nor upon rumour, nor upon what is in a scripture, nor upon surmise, nor upon an axiom." This is what we've been dealing with just now. What is translated here as surmise and axiom, but which is translated in another version as because of logic merely or because of its method. As we saw the two terms *naya* and *takka* - [91] they overlap to some extent but I think we've understood broadly what the Buddha was referring to when he used those two terms.

All right we go on now to "Nor upon specious reasoning." This is the Soma translation. Or the other version "Or in consideration of plausible reasoning."

So let's look at the dictionary. It does give us some help. According to the dictionary it is study of conditions or careful consideration. Examination of reasons. So what do you think that means? "Do not go by careful consideration." Well, it seems to mean that the fact that you've very carefully considered something is no reason for assuming that you can really go by that. The fact that you've thought about it for a long time doesn't mean that you're in a position to go by it, to accept it as an infallible criterion. Is that clear or is it no so clear?

Nagabodhi: I'm just not quite clear how it differs from some of the earlier quotes.

S: Yes, well no doubt there is a certain amount of interlapping. They're not clear cut. One can make them sort of clear cut or make them quite different but only by delimiting the meaning of each term in a way that - at least according to the dictionary - isn't justified.

Nagabodhi: Perhaps the time element.

S: Yes.

Manjuvajra: This seems to cut away almost any kind of foundation for believing in anything. I mean what this is saying is even if you've considered it yourself, gone into it yourself quite deeply.

S: It doesn't say actually yourself or emphasize quite deeply.

Manjuvajra: I understood that's what you were saying, that it was ... even if you yourself had carefully considered something and come to a conclusion.

S: Well, yes, presumably it is yourself, but the mere fact that you've been thinking about it for a long time - that seems to be the crucial factor here - doesn't mean that you are justified in regarding that as an infallible criterion. Maybe it's a bit like do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing. Repeated consideration of something sort of convinces you that it must be right or it must be true, because maybe by thinking about it for a long time you get sort of used to the idea and start accepting it. You familiarize yourself with the idea and it becomes more acceptable or more plausible. I think something like that is being got at here. I think we can't be quite sure but it seems something like that.

Do you actually find yourself ever doing that? You sell yourself an idea just by thinking about it long enough?

\_\_\_: Also I've found myself sometimes just taking my own common sense too seriously. What may have been applicable at [92] a certain time may not be so later on.

S: Yes. Well that would be an example of false inference. But this also links up with what comes next. Perhaps we'd better go straight on to that. "Nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over." This is ma ditthinijjhanakkhantiya - that is a fairly literal translation - nor upon a bias, an inclination towards a notion, an opinion, a view that has been pondered over, that you've absorbed yourself in - the word used here is jhana you notice.

Nagabodhi: Jhana?

S: Yes, in the sense of deep thought. So in the case of "nor upon specious reasoning or consideration" it's as though the element of time is suggested, but in the case of "nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over", it's as though it's the depth of your absorption in that idea which is taken into consideration. For instance, you find that you might read a book, that book might present a certain point of view, it might present it very powerfully, so reading the book, especially if you read it for a long time, you get very absorbed in that idea, you become almost identified with that idea, you accept it for the time being and you're not exactly convinced but you're sort of immersed in it and you find it very difficult to question it because you're so deeply involved with it. So you, for that reason, are inclined to accept it. The fact that you're deeply involved with that idea means it must be true. I think it's something of this sort that the Buddha is getting at here.

Clive: That can be taken in two ways can't it? You get deeply involved in an idea because

you've thought about it, and because you've thought about it you've given a lot of energy to it or you can get attached to an idea because you haven't thought about it.

S: It seems here what the Buddha was thinking about is when you really get carried away by an idea. I think the suggestion is that you haven't thought about it. It's something new to you but you get involved in it, absorbed in it, even identified with it, and you just start ... it's such a powerful experience that you start thinking of it as true. It carries its own conviction, as it were, just because it is such a powerful experience and you're so deeply into it.

Sona: It's like it takes you over.

S: It takes you over, yes.

\_\_\_: The word ponder I found a bit misleading - fixated I think more.

S: Yes, fixated would be good, yes. One could paraphrase it by saying you're not to accept an idea as necessarily true because it has succeeded in taking you over.

Clive: Do you think that if people really do think something [93] through then they're more open to an alternative idea? It's as if they've thought it through enough to see through it.

S: If they think it through, yes, I think they would be more open to an alternative idea, but if they're just absorbed in that particular idea and haven't thought it through or come out at the other end they can be quite impervious to other ideas. Not even be conscious of them; not be able to consider them.

Vajradaka: It's like the old term: getting into some trip.

S: Yes. You could say that truth is not a trip. That would sort of summarize it here. Truth is not a trip. It's not true because it's a good trip.

Nagabodhi: There is the word jhana used. Could you draw a link between this and, say, dhyanic experience, where you might have in the second dhyana an inspirational experience or a mystical experience in the third dhyana and build up the idea that you're enlightened?

S: Yes indeed. I think the word jhana here is used as part of this compound in a general sense of deep or concentrated thought. But nonetheless I think what you say would hold good.

Nagabodhi: So you can't believe your meditation experience.

S: Well, believe in the sense of putting a certain intellectual construction upon it. You can believe the experience as experience of course. You can say, well, I had an experience of bliss, yes certainly, I had an experience of upsurging energy, but that God gave me bliss or that God was sort of pumping energy into me - this is all intellectual interpretation in accordance with theological presuppositions.

Nagabodhi: Or because you're feeling alienated that you would experience the non-self.

S: Yes, right. There's a question of misinterpretation. You don't interpret correctly,

psychologically, in terms of alienation, you interpret in pseudo-spiritual terms, and you believe that you've, yes, realized the non-self or something like that.

Sometimes we tend to assume that an experience is true - or implies a truth - just because of the strength of an experience. I mean if we've had a strong experience, yes, it's a strong experience. As a strong experience it cannot be invalidated. But a strong experience does not establish the truth of what we strongly experience. For instance, if we feel very strongly that God exists, it is not that God is more likely to exist or that that statement is more likely to be true just because we feel it very strongly to be so. I mean in ordinary argument people very often mistake strength of conviction for some sort of evidence of the truth of something. It must be true because I believe it so strongly, but that is not necessarily so. You MAY believe it very strongly and it MAY be true, but it is not true because you believe it so strongly.

For instance you get this in the case of, well, say Christians, they sometimes point to the early martyrs. Well they died for their faith, it must be true. How can they have died [94] for it if it wasn't true? Well no, people have died for opposite things.

Clive: What about faith, then, in the sense of fulfilling a prophecy? You believe in something and it becomes true.

S: What do you mean exactly?

Clive: Well that's faith isn't it? The sort of making something a reality because you believe in its truth, making something happen.

S: So what does that prove?

Clive: Well you say it must be truth.

S: What do you mean by truth in that context?

Clive: Well, making something that's a myth an actual reality.

S: I think there's an ambiguity in the use of the word truth here - to make something come true. For instance you could say that the Nazis made their particular myth come true, but was it proved to be a true myth in the sense that I've been using the term? What sort of truth is one trying to prove in that sort of case, in that sort of way?

Clive: You're trying to prove that the ideal of human development is true by making it real within yourself.

S: Well, that is truth in the sense of verification.

[end of tape 5, start of tape 6]

... true and making something true. As I said there's an ambiguity in the use of the word truth or true here. There's a distinction between the practicable and the true in, as it were, the abstract sense.

Clive: In a sense the ideal isn't true until it's verified.

S: One could say that. One would say that there's no point in establishing the abstract truth of the ideal - the point is to verify it. You can go on arguing and arguing about the truth of the ideal in an abstract sense, but what is the point, because an ideal is an ideal for practice, for life. The only way of proving it - if it requires to be proved - is by verifying it, that is to say by actually embodying it in life. You can delineate the ideal or you can clarify the ideal, but it's rather pointless to try to prove it abstractly. You have to verify it, that is to say to embody it in actual practice, in actual life. So you're not making it true as though it didn't possess truth before. It possessed abstract truth. You could say you're now giving it concrete truth by practising it and by embodying it in life.

All right, let's go on to the next one. Oh perhaps we'd better not. It's half past twelve. Perhaps we'd better leave the next two for the afternoon because they are connected. We're not getting on very quickly but perhaps it doesn't matter.

Nagabodhi: So the statement "the highest ideal for man is enlightenment", you could argue over the whole of your life. [95]

S: Yes.

Nagabodhi: But on the other hand - well, even by going out and gaining enlightenment you wouldn't necessarily prove the abstract truth of that, you would simply ...

S: Well, there's no need to prove the abstract truth. It is not the abstract truth that needs to be proved. It's the very viability that needs to be demonstrated. You demonstrate the very viability by actually verifying it in your life.

Nagabodhi: That actually seems to be what all of this is building up to, this whole section that we've been reading, the irrelevance of abstract truth, of truth in an abstract sense.

S: Or trying to ascertain truth in the abstract sense. In a way as the Kalamas were assuming one should do or could do. Because they say "which of these reverend monks and brahmins spoke the truth and which falsehood?"

Manjuvajra: Ideals really are kind of outside of the range of truth and falsehood aren't they? It seems to me that supposing you're presented with two ideals - how it's pointless to argue which one of them's true or not. I mean ...

S: Well, you respond or you don't respond and this is where the non-rational element comes in of course. So one needs to put ideals before people in the form of myths or symbols, positive myths, or what I've called perhaps true myths, true symbols, positive myths, positive symbols, to which positive people can respond. It's not enough to put before them an abstract ideal. They might agree with it and accept it, but so what? It doesn't move them, it doesn't motivate them.

So therefore it does become important to sort of try to find those myths and symbols that can interpose themselves in between people's purely abstract understanding of an ideal which they've perhaps to accept and the reality of their ordinary everyday lives, their ordinary

everyday feelings.

So I think therefore it's not enough, to come back to a previous point, that the FWBO, the Movement as such, issues a purely rational appeal. That's not going to appeal to very many people. It might even appeal to the wrong sort of people, purely rational people who perhaps write learned commentaries on that ideal but won't do much more than that.

All right, let's leave it there for today. I don't know if we'll be able to finish the whole thing this afternoon but we might because there's a lot of repetition in what follows and we are on - in this Section 4, the criterion for rejection - the crucial section.

[next session]

S: All right, we've gone through "Do not go upon what has been acquired upon repeated hearing nor upon tradition nor upon rumour nor upon what is in the scriptures nor upon surmise nor upon an axiom nor upon specious reasoning nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over," and now we come to, "Nor upon another's seeming ability."

The literal translation would be ... the text is [96] bhavyarupataya. Bhavyarupa is something like appearance of likelihood. So this can be taken in two different ways. One is not to go by something if it appears that it is likely. That is not enough, but also it can be rendered as it is rendered here: "nor upon another's seeming ability". This seems to sort of refer to a situation when you're inclined to accept something that someone says as true because you're impressed by, or carried away by, the personality of the speaker. Do you see what the Buddha seems to be getting at here? Perhaps impressed by the personality in a way that has got nothing to do with what he's actually saying - which is not relevant to what he's actually saying.

For instance, if someone speaks very confidently, he speaks very well, he speaks very plausibly, his language is eloquent, his appearance is distinguished, his bearing is quite noble. You're impressed by those things and are more inclined therefore to credit the truth of what he says. You might even be impressed by the way he is dressed.

Alan: Would this be charisma?

S: Yes, you could speak of it in terms of charisma.

Vajradaka: There are lots of examples of that currently, aren't there?

S: Yes. In some ways the Theravada does go a bit to the extreme, but in certain respects it's on the sort of right track - there is a tradition among bhikkhus in Theravadin countries, not observed nowadays usually, except by old monks, that when a bhikkhu is giving a talk on the Dharma he holds a fan in front of his face. He speaks from behind the fan, the idea being you should not be impressed by his personal appearance in a subjective sort of way.

For instance, I remember talking about these sort of things with bhikkhu friends of mine in India, especially Sinhalese bhikkhus who often were quite interested in discussing these sort of things. They said it was well known among bhikkhus that well-built and handsome young monks always had a much better audience from among the lay people for their discourses, (laughter) and that sometimes bhikkhus who had an eye rather to the spread of the Dharma

used to look out for handsome young men in the villages because they knew that they would be more impressive in dealing with the lay people, because the lay people were unconsciously quite influenced by factors of this sort. That wasn't quite legitimate, perhaps, but you should see the way people's psychology works. People are influenced by personal appearances. They are more likely to believe someone who looks good, as it were, looks credible, or is impressive as a personality.

I remember a rather extreme example of this from my own experience. There was a Swiss whom I knew in India who went by the name of Yogi Shri George. (laughter) Have you ever heard of him? He died years and years ago, but Yogi Shri George came to India years and years ago shortly after the war and he was associated mainly with the Jains, though not long before his death he became a Buddhist of sorts and he stayed in Kalimpong a while. I forget whether he actually stayed with me or whether he stayed in Kalimpong and visited me or perhaps both at different times. But anyway Yogi Shri George was one of the most impressive looking people that I've ever encountered. He was about six foot six tall, he was very straight, very upright, [97] bore himself with tremendous dignity and nobility and was well built but without being stout, without being fat, and had an austere but kindly and fatherly expression and silvery grey hair and was about at the time forty-five. So people used to flock around and be very impressed by him in his white robe - white during his Jaina period - he really looked the archetypal - well - guru-like figure almost. But as I got to know him, when I'd known him just for a few days, I realized that Yogi Shri George was an absolute prize fool! (laughter) There's no other word for it. There was absolutely nothing to him, absolutely nothing! He used to carry around - this is just by the way - with him two enormous photograph albums, one photograph album showed all the palaces and luxury hotels in India in which he had ever stayed, the other contained photographs of himself with all sorts of prominent political figures, multimillionaires and big businessmen, and these were his two most prized possessions, and if you asked him he'd sit and show you these and explain exactly where the palaces were, how long he'd stayed there, who the politicians were and who the multimillionaires were, and how long he'd stayed with them and what good friends of his they were, and he seemed to circulate on this level and be received with great respect everywhere because of his impressive appearance. But he couldn't even say two words about the Dharma, whether the Jaina Dharma or the Buddhism Dharma. He was an absolute prize fool. There's no other word for it.

But people were so impressed by him, and I was myself initially impressed but not for long, only for perhaps a matter of, well, perhaps half an hour until he opened his mouth (laughter) and said something, and then you realized. But a lot of people remained impressed by him for years and years together. He came to rather a sad not to say sticky end - I won't go into that now but it was quite a few years ago, some time before I left India.

So this goes to illustrate this point, that sometimes you recommend what you say, or you support what you say, by the sort of person that you seem to be. So the Buddha is, as it were it seems, warning against being carried away by that sort of thing, being over-impressed by that sort of thing.

Sometimes if a speaker is maybe short, not very attractive in appearance, not very well clad, perhaps he's not a very good speaker, perhaps has got no airs and graces, no oratory, maybe not a very good command of language, one might be inclined to dismiss the truth of what he says or to underestimate it or not take it very seriously. This could be a great mistake. We all

know that from our own experience, maybe even within the FWBO, that there are people who are not very good speakers perhaps, technically, but they have something worthwhile to say which is worth listening to, and maybe there are other people who are more glib, or have a better command of language, but when you probe into it more deeply they haven't really got all that much to say. The best of course is if you have a combination of the two, but one must be able to make the distinction and not be over-inclined to accept the truth of what somebody says because just as a 'personality' - inverted commas - he's a bit impressive, or less inclined to accept the truth of what he says just because as a 'personality' he's a bit less impressive.

Nagabodhi: What about in the context say of a beginners' class at a centre, taking into account that people from the world do have these preconceptions? I've sometimes felt that the people who [98] lead a class or who give the talks should actually have some personality because if they don't, no matter how good they are, however sincere - a few sensitive people may pick up on what's going on but a lot of people will just ignore them.

S: I just wonder about this. I think quite often people are a bit more canny than we give them credit for. Do you think that is not so?

Nagabodhi: I sort of feel, say, in a London centre where people are very deadened really ...

S: Well, put it in this way. If someone has got something to say, say an Order member in this context, really something to say, knows what they are talking about, knows what they are doing, perhaps it is an additional advantage to have an attractive personality. So one might conceivably prefer to put that sort of person in front of the class rather than someone who is equally genuine and equally had something to say but who didn't have the same superficially pleasing personality. But what one should under no circumstances do is to put in front of the class someone who has merely a pleasing personality and not much more than that, assuming that there are such people in the Order. I'm not even saying that there are, but you get the principle that I'm laying down?

Nagabodhi: I'm thinking quite specifically of beginners' classes.

S: If there is something to be explained, clearly the Order member concerned needs to be articulate, but I think if you reach a certain degree or level of understanding or personal development you ARE articulate. I don't accept that a person can develop as an individual and not be able to communicate. That doesn't mean not able to communicate in a glib polished way, it may be in a quite rough way, an unpolished way, but the communication is there nonetheless. So I don't accept the possibility of, say, having an Order member who is really a very well comparatively developed individual, with all the qualities of an individual, but by some sort of strange chance or accident he's unable to explain anything to anybody. I don't accept that possibility. He may be a man of fewer words, he may be a man of less polished expression, but he is equally effective in communication actually. If he can't communicate at all I'd suggest that there was something wrong with him as an individual, something lacking in him as an individual.

Nagabodhi: Do you think you'd extend that principle to a public situation, not just one to one but to a public situation, speaking to sort of fifty, sixty newcomers?

S: I think one should be able to. I think if one is an individual one should be able to do that.

One may not be a 'speaker' - inverted commas - but one should be able to express and to communicate one's thoughts. One should be able to explain things in a reasonably ordered fashion. One may not have a very polished accent or one's vocabulary may not be very extensive, but one would still be able to put across what one wanted to put across. I think communication is an essential quality - or the power to communicate is an essential quality of the individual. [99] But one doesn't identify that quality with a sort of glib articulateness or an over-familiarity with words.

All right, so "nor upon another's seeming ability". Is that sufficiently clear? "Nor upon the consideration, 'The monk is our teacher.'" In Pali that will be *ma samano no garu ti*, which literally means nor out of respect for the fact that someone is a monk, a samana. Soma translates here: the monk is our teacher - no, it doesn't say teacher, it just says out of respect, but it is the kind of respect which is appropriate to a teacher. It is out of respect thinking that somebody is a samana. Why is this? Why should you not accept something as necessarily true just because the person who says it is a samana?

\_\_\_: They may be wrong.

S: Yes, but why is it that they may be wrong?

Subhuti: You have to look at what they're really like.

S: You have to look at what they're really like. Yes. I'm sorry to say that in the Buddhist world today very often one is expected to swallow what somebody says just because he's a bhikkhu or just because he's a lama or just because he's a roshi etc., etc. It's not enough to look at the person's lifestyle - to use that expression - or the way in which he is dressed. That is no guarantee of the authenticity or the truth of what he is saying. It should be, but in this imperfect world it isn't. A bhikkhu ought to be an arhant, but quite often he isn't. A lama ought to be an incarnate Bodhisattva, but quite often he isn't in fact. Some of them have confessed it to me. (laughter) I can remember some of them telling me in Kalimpong almost tearfully that "I'm supposed to be an incarnate lama but you know I'm not really." They've actually come and said this to me. But they are regarded by others as incarnate lamas, but they're quite conscious of the fact that they're not anything like it. They in some cases have just found themselves landed with it. They've been brought up as incarnate lamas, they were selected as children and brought up as incarnate lamas, but they're quite conscious of the fact that they're not very capable and not very learned and even mentally not very stable in some cases - in the case of two who came to me, not emotionally very positive, not very learned in the teaching, and not really able to offer any guidance to anybody.

Sometimes, of course, they don't recognize this themselves. They perhaps believe that they are incarnate lamas nonetheless in a sense, in the sense of enjoying that particular status and thinking that they are entitled to it.

Nagabodhi: Just by the way would a real incarnate lama know without doubt that he was, or might he not have doubts from time to time?

S: I think in Tibet in the old days the atmosphere was very supportive. If you are doing reasonably well and everybody is telling you that you are an incarnate lama I think you don't have any difficulties, any great soul searchings. I remember one particular friend of mine, as

he afterwards became, who came [100] to Kalimpong and did a bit of journalistic work as well as being a scholar. I remember one of the things that he wrote about Dhardo Rimpoche whom he knew. It was quite acute in a way. He wasn't a Buddhist but he was sympathetic to some extent to Buddhism. He said Dhardo Rimpoche had been brought up to believe that he was an incarnate lama and acted accordingly! (laughter)

The support of the environment can be very strong indeed. The proof, the test, is when that environment is taken away, and this is what we found with the Tibetan refugee monks and lamas and incarnate lamas even. When the support of the environment, when the support of Tibetan culture and social institutions and religious institutions was removed, what happened to a lot of them? At least a third of the monks didn't last six months as monks. They had no sort of real individual sense of vocation - to use that term. They could be monks in a situation like that of Tibet in the old days but put them on their own in an environment that didn't encourage them to be monks and they didn't remain monks for more than six months at the most. And there were even some incarnate lamas who fell by the wayside, geshees who fell by the wayside. I had a letter from one of them only a few weeks ago, an old friend of mine who used to be the abbot of the big monastery in Kalimpong, and he wrote a quite sad letter. I remember him very well. He's now in Darjeeling. He's teaching Tibetan in a Christian college and he wrote that I would be sorry to hear that when his brother died some years ago he - according to Tibetan custom - had had to take over the support of his brother's wife and he said, well you know, passions are very strong, etc., etc and to cut a long story short I'm now living with this woman and I'm no more a monk and no more an abbot, and I'm very unhappy etc, etc. So I remember him very well. So he lasted a few years but he didn't last longer than that.

So that is the proof, that is the test, as it were, of whether you really are a monk, whether you really are an incarnate lama, or whether you're just wearing the robes, just wearing the insignia and enjoying the position. That's the test: when circumstances change and there's no encouragement and no support from your environment. So sometimes I say, for instance, that Order members ought to ask themselves how long would they be able to carry on if the support of the Order was removed, if they were thrown out of their communities and co-ops into a very hostile and unsympathetic, uncongenial environment where it was a struggle to be a Buddhist, a struggle to be an Order member - whether they'd be able to keep up their faith and their commitment and their meditation and their right livelihood and so on. It's quite a question. It's easy to condemn the Tibetan monks and incarnate lamas, but would one be able to do very much better than that? One has to ask oneself.

So, human nature being like that you can't be sure whether the man in yellow robes who is speaking to you is in fact a bhikkhu. Whether the man in red robes is really a lama, whether the man who's wearing the black cap is really a karmapa. So you can't accept as true something that they say, simply because they are saying it and they are a bhikkhu or a lama or whatever it may be. There is another text in which the Buddha says do not accept what I say as simply out of respect for me but test by words - as the goldsmith tests the gold in the fire. [Not in the Pali canon. I think Bhante once said it's in one of the commentaries, but we have never been able to trace it. tr.] It has been pointed out that no other spiritual teacher has ever said anything like that. Others have usually asked for faith.

And of course sometimes one encounters teachers who claim to be enlightened. This is Rajneesh's line, as it were; he is enlightened therefore you have to accept everything that

[101] he says, even if he contradicts himself. Enlightened people do contradict themselves he says.

So it's as though when the Buddha says "nor upon another's seeming ability" here: you are not to accept the truth of something that somebody says just because of his favourable personal appearance or because of the favourable impression that he has made upon you personally. But when he says "nor upon the consideration, 'The monk is our teacher,'" you should not be overimpressed by the fact that someone occupies a certain, as it were, religious position - that someone is a samana or a bhikkhu or a lama as the case may be.

Sometimes there is a natural correlation between a deeper understanding and the fact that someone is a samana, is a bhikkhu, or is a lama, but that is not a necessary connection. You can't depend upon it. It may be, yes, that [when] some bhikkhus or some lamas are more experienced and more enlightened than you are, you can expect that what they say is likely to be true, that you can accept it, but you can't be completely sure of that, so therefore you have to look to the man himself not to the position that he occupies in the ecclesiastical or even in the so-called spiritual hierarchy.

Sometimes people try to get you to accept something by pointing to the nature or the position or the rank of the person who has said it. There's another aspect of this: that if you're more inclined to accept something because it is believed to be true by someone who is prominent in some way. That the king has accepted Buddhism, that the aristocracy has accepted Buddhism, that the intellectual elite has accepted it, therefore it must be true.

Alan: You get this in the media. Somebody might be a Nobel Prize winner and he's quoted as an authority on something totally different.

S: Yes, because he's a Nobel Prize winner he's quoted as an authority on something that he knows nothing about and he allows himself to be quoted.

Sona: I think it was last year's Nobel Peace Prize winner being booked for aggressive behaviour at London Airport. He attacked an immigration officer.

S: So we find that the Buddha has now given a tenfold criterion for rejection.

"Do not go upon what has been acquired upon repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumour; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration, 'The monk is our teacher.' Kalamas, when you yourselves know: 'These things are bad; these things are blamable; these things are censured by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill,' abandon them."

So here we come to the criterion, "The criterion for rejection". When you yourselves know: Attana va janeyyatha: when you know of yourself, when you yourself know, as we would say - when you yourselves know these things are bad - ime dhamma akusala - these things are unskilful - ime dhamma savajja - these things are blamable - ime dhamma vinnugarahita - these [102] things are censured by the wise. Samatta sammadinna ahitaya dukkhaya samvattanti ti - undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill. When you know

this of yourself, abandon them. So here's the criteria, these are the negative criteria. When you yourselves know these things are bad, these things are blamable, these things are censured by the wise. Undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill, abandon them.

The Buddha then in the next section gives a simple example, but there are several points to be raised before we go on to that next section. The Buddha says "when you yourselves know", in other words you can't really rely upon anybody else, you can't go by any external authority, which is what the Kalamas were really looking for. Even if you decide that one particular samana or brahma is right and the others are wrong, well, you have to decide.

So you should reject teachings not on anybody's authority but when you yourself know that they are - well, bad is the translation: akusala. So what does this suggest? If you say that something is akusala, which means unskilful, what does it suggest?

Subhuti: Experience.

S: Some kind of experience. Some sort of practicality. The word translated as things, by the way, is dhamma. It's things, yes, it's also teachings, as you know, principles, facts, or courses of action, qualities. So it's not a question of abstract goodness or badness, it's a question of skilfulness or unskilfulness, which suggests in practice, in experience. If, for instance, you speak in terms of a carpenter you wouldn't say that a carpenter was theoretically an unskilled carpenter, would you?

\_\_\_: No.

S: So why is that? Because skill or unskill has relation only to practice and only to experience. So when the Buddha says that when you yourselves know these things are unskilful then he suggests by implication an appeal to practice and experience.

Nagabodhi: The trouble with that as I see it is that it seems to be suggesting that actually you maybe do have to try everything and therefore, surely, there must be people you can turn to for help.

S: Well, we're coming to that in a minute.

Nagabodhi: It still leaves things wide open. If you've got to experience everything before you can reject it then you don't need criteria because you're just going to experience everything.

S: Well, as I said, we're coming to that in a minute. Well, right now. The text says, "These things are blamable; these things are censured by the wise". These two things go together. They are blamable in the sense that presumably they are censured by the wise. But who are the wise and how do you know that they are wise?

Subhuti: Out of experience. (laughter)[103]

Nagabodhi: By trying what they have said.

S: But how do you know? There is definitely here an appeal to the judgement of the verdict of the wise. It is true you have to go by your own experience. That is the decisive factor. But you

also have to give ear to what is said by the wise. You have to avoid those things which are blamed by the wise. So is there a contradiction here?

Manjuvajra: Does this mean the wise in the abstract? Sort of avoid those things that would be censured by those people who are wise, whoever or wherever they might be?

S: One could say that, but then you would have to know who the wise in that sense were, which means that you would have to know what wisdom was.

Manjuvajra: It would have to appeal to that sort of sense in yourself.

S: Yes, you could argue that it's an appeal, as it were, to the abstract wise men. Do you see what I mean? As though you should not do what you can imagine people who were really wise not doing, or blaming you for doing. You could look at it in that way. But that suggests of course that you have some criterion, doesn't it? And how would you arrive at that criterion? How would you arrive at a knowledge of what the wise would be unlikely to do?

Subhuti: You would really have to go by your own experience to test what they said and see how it worked, and then you might extrapolate from it.

S: But is that entirely so? Is there any way in which you could go by what other allegedly wise people said? You notice that it's the wise in the plural. Is there any significance in that?

Clive: By being receptive to more than one source of (?information/inspiration), and seeing what truth comes or is deduced overall. Thinking about it yourself.

Abhaya: What is the word for wise?

S: It's literally those who know. It's vinnu, those who know. From the root vid - to know, as with vidya, avidya, and so on.

Abhaya: Couldn't it refer to not specifically wise men, but people whom you see they've done skilful things, and the fruits of what they've done? Through observing these people and the way that they behave, then you can have confidence in them as an example because you've seen how the fruits work out in their life.

S: It seems to mean something like that. In other words you don't go purely by the subjective factors, that is to say your own experience. You do go, in practice, to some extent, by what is said by those who, as far as you can see, are experienced and are skilled and who deserve to be listened to. It's as ...

[end of side, next side]

... you are in a way going in a circle. Because of your own limited experience you can understand how somebody is [104] knowledgeable to some extent more than you are, and because of that you have a bit of faith in them and you feel you can rely on what they say. Relying on what they say, you practise still more skilfully. Practising still more skilfully you are able to appreciate still more the fact that they are wise. This seems to be how it proceeds. But it is not that you invest any of these sort of wise men, these knowledgeable men, with a

sort of absolute authority.

Clive: Could it just mean that there might be a certain experience or a certain quality that they have, but they're not sort of comprehensively wise, but a certain quality...?

S: I think probably one can understand it better, say, by looking at people's experience within the Movement, especially with regard to Order members. For instance, when people come along they sort of hear about different Order members and they see different Order members and they start getting their own different impressions direct and indirect, second, third, and fourth hand perhaps, about certain Order members or about all Order members, and perhaps they start hearing that Order member such and such has got a good understanding of certain Buddhist texts, that he knows those Buddhist texts, he is a knowledgeable person, and they feel because of the whole ambience of the situation that they can rely upon that information. They feel that the people who are talking, the people who are saying that that particular Order member knows those texts, know what they are talking about. There are a number of people who have perhaps been on that particular Order member's study groups, and they know that those people have gained benefit or say that they have gained benefit, say that they've gained a better understanding of those particular texts, by listening to that Order member's explanation. So in that way you come to have a sort of conviction that that particular person is, on that particular subject, within that particular area, a knowledgeable person. You don't really know that from your own experience but it's quite a reasonable thing to take it on trust and therefore a reasonable thing to take seriously what that Order member says on a particular text if you happen to be in his study group for that particular text. Do you see what I mean?

So in this way that would be taking note of, or taking seriously, what the wise said, what the knowledgeable said. And if in the light of their general understanding of, say, that particular text or even the teaching as a whole, they blamed certain courses of action, and praised certain others, you would be inclined to take that seriously and act upon it, even if you realized it also had to be confirmed in the light of your own experience. But you would not reject whatever they said. I think it's that sort of situation that the Buddha has in mind when he speaks of oneself knowing "these things are blamable; these things are censured by the wise." That there are certain circumstances within which you can rely upon what people say, at least up to a point, even though, granted, it must be confirmed eventually in your own experience, and the sooner the better.

Nagabodhi: I can imagine situations that, for example, you might - if you're looking for a spiritual group or a spiritual community you make contact with a load of sanyassins who aren't blithering idiots, who are quite sort of sensible people, and you could meet hundreds of them literally who all tell you "Bhagwan is worth listening to, go to Poona." No matter how many people and how ... [105] they could all be victims of these other things we've been discussing. You could meet lots and lots of people who seem wise and still slip up. Their advice could be wrong.

S: I doubt very much if they could be described as wise in this sense.

Vajradaka: Seemingly wise, yes.

S: Because it's not that Bhagwan has got the sort of reputation that I've imagined, say, a particular Order member having. Bhagwan has got a much more exalted reputation than that,

something that requires a lot more truth and a lot more evidence that he is enlightened, that he claims to be enlightened. One can read these words of his in so many of the books that have been published by him or on his behalf.

\_\_\_: So you mean the proof should be commensurate with, in a sense, what you are...?

S: Indeed, the proof should be commensurate with the claim. To claim that a particular Order member understands a particular text well and that you can benefit from his explanation of it, that is a quite modest claim which you can understand, which you can perhaps quite rationally accept has been apparently verified by a number of trustworthy people. But if people start claiming what on a superficial examination appears to be insufficient grounds that Bhagwan is God or that Bhagwan knows everything, you can't really regard those people as wise! It's not that you know that Bhagwan isn't God, but you appreciate the enormity of the claim and they seem to be treating that claim very lightly because they seem to be accepting it so easily without, so far as you can see, any evidence, or at least they're not able to produce much in the way of evidence for you. They can only say, well, you go to Poona and you'll be convinced. Well that's not an argument.

Vajradaka: It's just as valid as saying, well, I don't believe he's enlightened, as it is for them to say that they think he is.

S: Yes indeed, at least. So therefore the wise who are referred to here are people much more like my hypothetical Order member than like the sanyassins that you were referring to whom one would just regard as a credulous bunch of people. Perhaps they're sensible in other ways but that's beside the point. They may be sensible when it comes to engineering or advertising, but they're not sensible when it comes to the question of authority in religion or the question of personal status, of personal claims in religion. They seem to lose their common sense and intelligence when it comes to dealing with these matters - to an extraordinary degree.

Manjuvajra: There's quite a subtle difference actually. The conditions under which you accept someone as wise and the conditions under which you reject according to the list that we've studied.

S: Indeed yes, because it's quite clear that you don't go simply according to your own experience. Or you can't perhaps. You do give some weight to the opinion of those who seem, as far as you can see, entitled to have an opinion. [106]

Subhuti: But even when you do that, you do it on the basis of your own experience.

S: Well no, not experience in the narrower sense at least. You do it on the basis of your own observation and certain conclusions that you draw. Say in the case of the example I gave you are, say, favourably impressed by the general spirit of the FWBO centre that you happen to have gone along to. They seem pretty sensible people. There doesn't seem to be anything particularly weird going on. They seem to be sincere. When they say they've been on a study group with a particular Order member, yes, you feel that you can believe them. When they say that they've benefited from it you feel that you can believe them. It has the ring of truth, so to speak. So you use your sort of rational judgement to some extent so that when that particular Order member tells you something and suggests that you follow a certain line of action or don't follow a certain line, you feel that you can place some confidence in that. You're not

erecting him into an authority, you're not investing his words with anything like infallibility, but you are convinced that they should be taken seriously and at least given a trial; at the least you feel that. You're not swept off your feet by his charisma.

In another sense, of course, it does come down to your own experience because you might walk in at the door of an FWBO centre but due to your own - what we would regard as - negative conditioning or limitations you might not be impressed at all. You might be looking for something quite different, something maybe that we would regard as quite unhealthy and quite unskilful. But as I said sometime ago, within our experience there is a subjective element and an objective element. You can't ignore either, so it's as though those two elements reappear in this sort of situation too. You have to pay attention to your own actual personal experience, but you also have to give some heed to what is said by those who appear, as far as you can see, to have a right to an opinion.

Abhaya: It comes down to responsibility.

S: As far as you can see. It's as though you have a responsibility to think, you have a responsibility to question, to examine, not just to accept unquestioningly everything that you are told or anything that you are told. Even when you accept what is said by the wise you accept it provisionally until such time as it can be confirmed in your own experience. You don't accept it absolutely and then adopt the attitude: well, you know it's true so you don't even need to test it in your own experience. You don't adopt that sort of attitude.

Abhaya: Otherwise you're still trying to bypass your own experience, you're trying to cut that out.

S: Yes. So what the wise offer you is only guidelines that you must follow in practice and following which you will confirm in your own experience the truth of what they say. They are not asking you to believe, just because they tell you so, anything that you cannot verify in your own experience. That's the difference between the truly wise and those who only claim to know, those who claim to be omniscient even, or who claim to be infallible.

Abhaya: Those who claim to be infallible: it seems that they are wanting an experience themselves in recognition from you. [107]

S: It's as though they say you don't need to verify it: well, you know it's true because I say so, don't even think in terms of verification. But the wise, when they tell you what's what, do so on the understanding that you are going to try to verify for yourself.

Abhaya: This is the whole emphasis in Buddhism as distinct from other religions.

S: Right.

Nagabodhi: It seems to be a distinguishing feature that there is nothing worth knowing that you can't test in your own experience.

S: Right, yes. For instance I have referred in the past to some of the dogmas of the Christian religion. For instance, to take an extreme example, the virgin birth. What can that possibly mean for you in terms of your own experience? What earthly way have you of testing whether

that is true or not? You can't. You've got to accept it absolutely on faith because the church tells you it is so. But you are asked to believe these things; there's no question of verification. But Buddhism doesn't really tell you - I'm speaking now especially in terms of the Buddha's actual teaching as far as we can make it out - doesn't ask you to believe anything that you are not able to verify for yourself if you only make the effort.

Anyway I think we'd better move on a little quickly now. Would someone like to read the whole of the next section, 'Greed, hate, and delusion', because it's just an expansion of something quite simple.

"Greed, hate, and delusion. What do you think, Kalamas? Does greed appear, in a man, when it does, for his benefit or harm? - For his harm, venerable sir. - Kalamas, being given to greed, and being overwhelmed and vanquished mentally by greed, this man takes life, steals, commits adultery, and tells lies; he prompts another too to do likewise. Will that be long for his harm and ill? - Yes, venerable sir.

"What do you think, Kalamas? Does hate appear in a man, when it does, for his benefit or harm? - For his harm, venerable sir. - Kalamas, being given to hate, and being overwhelmed and vanquished mentally by hate, this man takes life, steals, commits adultery, and tells lies; he prompts another too to do likewise. Will that be long for his harm and ill? - Yes, venerable sir.

"What do you think, Kalamas? Does delusion appear in a man, when it does, for his benefit or harm? - For his harm, venerable sir. - Kalamas, being given to delusion, and being overwhelmed and vanquished mentally by delusion, this man takes life, steals, commits adultery, and tells lies; he prompts another too to do likewise. Will that be long for his harm and ill? - Yes, venerable sir. [108]

"What do you think, Kalamas? Are these things good or bad? - Bad, venerable sir. - Blamable or not blamable? - Blamable, venerable sir. - Censured or praised by the wise? - Censured, venerable sir. - Undertaken and observed, do these things lead to harm or ill, or not? Or how does it strike you here? - Undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill. Thus it strikes us here.

"Therefore, did we say, Kalamas, what was said thus, 'Come Kalamas. Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumour; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration, 'The monk is our teacher.' Kalamas, when you yourselves know: 'These things are bad; these things are blamable; these things are censured by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill,' abandon them.'"

S: So what is the Buddha's argument essentially in this section?

Manjuvajra: What in your own experience happens if these things arise?

S: Yes, he's giving the Kalamas an example from their own experience. They know from their own experience that lobha: greed or craving, dosa: hatred, and moha: delusion, if acted upon, lead to harm, lead to unpleasant, undesired consequences for themselves, because it's on

account of these three things being given to them, being overwhelmed by them, being vanquished mentally by them, that people - as we say - break the precepts and prompt others to do likewise. One can know from one's own experience that greed, for instance, is unskilful because when you act upon greed, if you act with motives of greed, then you commit actions which you find within your own experience don't do you any good at all. And the Buddha in this way enumerates the first four precepts.

There's just something to be noted here: he says this man takes life, such and such a man takes life, which it is agreed leads to harm and ill, steals, commits adultery. Actually the text doesn't say commits adultery. The text says *paradaram pi gacchati* - goes to another's wife. This is virtually adultery one could say - goes to another's wife, has to do with another's wife. There's another translation I'm thinking of - yes, commits sexual misconduct - that is much too wide. It isn't *kamesu micchachara* here, it's *paradaram pi gacchati*, goes to or goes with another's wife. Why do you think this is so unskilful? What makes it unskilful?

Nagabodhi: The suffering that it causes to at least two people.

S: Yes.[109]

Abhaya: But in a traditional society it would create havoc because so much depends on the fathering of the children and so on.

S: Suppose someone, for instance a feminist, raised the point that, after all, what is adultery? What is the marriage bond? After all, it's only a means to secure a valid inheritance. A man wants to be sure that it's his children and not somebody else's children that are going to inherit his property. So is that really a very positive system? In breaking up that sort of system are you really doing anything so very unskilful? Would not a feminist argue in that sort of way? And if so what would you reply to her?

Subhuti: Probably agree with her.

\_\_\_: But that was the system.

S: That was the system, yes,

Manjuvajra: And if that was the system, breaking the system would cause a lot of disruption. It seems to me that adultery is important within that context.

S: So what you're really saying is even if a system is unskilful you are not justified in breaking it up if it results in pain and suffering for anybody.

Manjuvajra: I probably would say that, but also I wouldn't say that I don't think that's necessarily unskilful, that system. I think that system is reasonable. I don't think it's understood within ... from a spiritual sense.

S: In other words you would say that, morally speaking, marriage has a certain validity and therefore to that extent it's to some extent a moral bond, to that extent even a skilful bond, and that you will be committing an unskilful action if on account of your unrestrained desires you were to be breaking that up. This is what you're actually saying. This is what you ought to

reply to the feminists in other words.

Subhuti: You'd also have to take issue with seeing the marriage bond only as a means of passing down property.

S: Yes, of course, yes.

Subhuti: It's obviously much more than that.

Clive: If that was the only consideration, then it doesn't really apply any more because in the Buddha's days children were likely to occur after such a contact, but nowadays they are not. Well, hardly.

S: This is a question that comes up. Does one think here only in terms of legal marriage? If someone is not legally married to somebody else are you entitled to sort of muscle in on their scene, as it were, just because you feel like it or because the woman has a moment of weakness, as it were?

Abhaya: But then there are other factors to be taken into consideration like is it a very unhealthy relationship. It might be a question of two people who are highly emotionally dependent [110] on each other.

S: So you can imagine a sort of Bodhisattva-like character seeing this sort of (laughter) ... seeing the unhealthy relationship between these two people and deliberately breaking it up? Well this is theoretically possible.

Abhaya: No, but I mean between that whereas it's just not necessarily ... there's no sense of a moral bond at all, where two people are not relating in a healthy way at all. Suppose you do commit adultery.

S: Yes, so the Buddhist person would be justified in interposing one could say. After all, here one is speaking of being motivated by greed; one could conceive of the Bodhisattva-like character not being motivated by greed. Obviously there's scope for rationalization, but that shouldn't cause one to shrink from the principle involved here.

Nagabodhi: Merely to show the deluded husband or whatever just what a shaky basis he's (taken rest on.)

Clive: On the other hand quite a lot of marriages aren't really marriages in the sense of there being much of a bond, except the sexual bond, so what would you be breaking up, apart from...?

Abhaya: That's the point I was trying to make.

S: So the question arises: is it possible to commit adultery? Because if the two people really had, let us say, to use the term, a skilful relationship, would there be any possibility of it being broken up? Would there be any possibility of any of them having an affair on the side, let us say, with you? So as if to say if it is possible for someone to commit adultery, the marriage is already broken up anyway. Could you not argue like that, and that therefore there was no such

thing as adultery, morally speaking?

Vajradaka: You mean that there wouldn't be any attachment between the two people involved, so that if you did go with one the other one wouldn't be hurt?

S: No, I didn't mean that. I'm not speaking in terms of hurting, but I'm speaking in terms of the thing actually happening, as it were. If two people were really married, taking it in a positive sense, could either of them ever think of entering into an adulterous relationship with a third party? If that did happen, presumably that would indicate that in a sense they weren't really married to begin with, and if they weren't really married would the question of adultery therefore arise?

Abhaya: But the whole idea of marriage in this context means for better or for worse, till death do us part.

S: Well, that's the Christian conception of marriage.

Abhaya: Well, whatever conception.

S: Well, that raises the question, well, how does one conceive of marriage from a Buddhist point of view? Because unless one can conceive of marriage from a Buddhist point of view, one can't conceive of adultery from a Buddhist point of view, and clearly [111] the text does say that it is an unskillful thing if out of greed one commits adultery, one goes with the wife of another. So what is it from the Buddhist point of view that makes it unskillful?

Clive: Is it the motive of greed?

S: No, not just that, because you could say the motive of greed would apply to a whole range of sexual relationships, but here it's definitely the wife of another man that's indicated.

Abhaya: Well, maybe because you're interfering with a bond which you know has been agreed between two people, and that is sacrosanct because they have made that bond and if you know that, and then you interfere with that, that's unskillful.

S: Not only that. It is not agreed between those two people but recognized by the society which they belong. So even assuming that their relationship is not all that it should be, or that they're not fully acting up to the agreement that they've entered upon, it is not for you to make it worse, it is not for you to introduce an additional complicating factor.

Vajradaka: If there is going to be any split or any break, they should do it rationally.

S: With the agreement of society perhaps, and after that when the person concerned was free, so to speak, then you might consider entering into a relationship of your own with them.

Abhaya: But from what you've said about sexual mores I would take it that in your view this sort of bond doesn't enter into Buddhist relationships. There's no such thing as exclusive sexual relationships. That's how I've always understood what your teaching is on this.

S: I would say it is possible for two people to enter into an agreement that they should have

an exclusive sexual relationship.

Abhaya: Do you think this is a good thing to do?

S: Well, it depends upon the circumstances. It can be entered upon with a negative motive, it can I think also be entered upon with a positive motive. For instance, you could enter upon it with a negative motive if out of sheer possessiveness you wanted to guarantee to yourself the exclusive possession of sexual rights in the other person. On the other hand, you might be well aware that you have a tendency to promiscuity and that that needed to be brought under control; you might be aware that your tendency to promiscuity leads to a certain amount of waste of time and mental uneasiness and anxiety on your part. At the same time you might feel that it is not possible for you to give up sex altogether, so you therefore might enter into an agreement with another person that you would commit yourselves to each other exclusively in the sexual sense. That possibility can't be excluded as a positive possibility.

So if two people have entered into that sort of agreement, and if Buddhist marriage, or if the expression Buddhist marriage, has any significance at all it has only that. Then a third party would be acting unskillfully if they attempted or succeeded in breaking it up, because in a way you would have been instrumental in inducing somebody to break their vow. Just as [119] if someone had vowed to give up smoking and you, say, come on, have a fag, it won't do you any harm. That's unskillful. And in the same way if you know that two people, whether for life or for a limited period, have agreed - in the sense of vowed - to limit their sexual activity to each other it would be acting unskillfully on your part if you disrupted that.

Abhaya: Just to follow this through. Accepting that, how do we look at - regard - people who have made the vow in the Christian context? How would you regard that? Disrupting that sort of relationship which you believe maybe was made on a false basis.

S: Well, first of all I think you have to examine your own motives, you have to see whether you are acting just out of greed, just out of sexual desire, or whether you are also concerned somewhat with the well-being of those particular people. Then you have to try to understand to what extent their relationship is skillful, to what extent it is unskillful, and whether by intervening in that way you would in fact, on balance, do more good than harm, and that might not be at all easy to say. You just have to try to be as sincere as you possibly could.

Abhaya: Obviously you can't interpret this word adultery on the basis of a bond which they entered into and on the basis which you don't accept.

S: If it was based simply on strong mutual infatuation, or if it was based upon sacramental notions that you don't accept, well, then you might consider that you were justified in intervening, but on the other hand you might see that there is something skillful mixed up with it all nonetheless, and you might do more harm than good, conceivably, by getting involved in that particular way.

Clive: It could be that the bond in the moral sense doesn't exist, so is it really a marriage?

S: Yes, you might even take that view: that the two people concerned are only legally married. For instance, to give a very extreme case, they might even be separated, have not seen each other for years together. In the eyes of the law they are legally married and either of

them would be committing adultery in consorting with a third party. You might consider that to be of no significance at all. You might genuinely think, well, that couldn't be regarded as adultery; it would be just a legal fiction there; it doesn't correspond to anything at all in the actual relationship. On the other hand, two people might be reasonably happily married and getting on well together but you might be a born seducer, as it were, with the gift of the gab to talk a poor woman off her feet. You shouldn't take advantage of that because you're motivated by your own greed.

I think we have to sort of think things out in this sort of way when we encounter expressions of this sort. If it is unskilful to commit adultery, well, what is adultery according to Buddhism? Which means asking what is marriage for Buddhism? Anyway, perhaps we've lingered long enough over that topic. But it does, amongst other examples of breaking the precepts due to greed or hatred or delusion, give us a concrete example of the sort of thing that the Buddha is talking about.[112]

He is, as it were, saying to the Kalamas, well, in this particular instance, you all know what adultery is, you know what the consequences are, you know for yourself whether it's skilful or unskilful, you know for yourself whether when you act in that sort of way it leads to harm and suffering or not: that's the sort of thing I'm talking about. You know for yourself if out of greed you tell lies: it gets you into trouble; it causes unpleasantness; it leads to complications and suffering. That's the sort of thing I'm talking about, verified by your own experience. You can know from your own experience whether something is right or whether something is wrong, true or false, skilful or unskilful.

Nagabodhi: He does seem to be making an appeal almost to a sort of common sense. It's almost taking the whole thing out of the clouds and saying, actually, if we're honest, we do know an awful lot more than our actions maybe tend to suggest.

S: To go back to this example of adultery, when someone is contemplating perhaps an adulterous affair, in his heart of hearts he knows it's going to lead to trouble of some kind, unless it's adultery in the purely technical sense. He knows he's going to do some unpleasantness to somebody. He knows that. So this is the sort of thing that the Buddha is talking about: when you know from your own experience that something, if persisted in, if pursued, is going to lead to untoward consequences. You don't need to ask anybody else about that. You know from your own experience and should act accordingly.

And you know also that the wise don't approve of that sort of thing. Well, that's pretty obvious too, that any sensible person would disapprove. Perhaps one shouldn't translate as the wise or those who know; it's sensible people: sensible people disapprove of adultery, sensible people disapprove of taking life, sensible people disapprove of telling lies, sensible people disapprove of things like that, and you yourself know that it's wrong. So perhaps the Buddha is just bringing things down to earth here, as you say.

Manjuvajra: This term being overwhelmed and vanquished mentally - is that sort of having your mindfulness disturbed by...?

S: Well, it's more than that even, isn't it? Those are very strong expressions and they - I won't give you the Pali but I did check them up - are quite literal. Not being overwhelmed and not vanquished mentally.

Surata: What are the implications of vanquished? Is it more than just defeated?

S: Vanquished means defeated. Perhaps it's a slightly stronger term.

\_\_\_: Defeated and cast out.

S: Overwhelmed suggests being submerged, crushed.

[end of tape 6, start of tape 7]

... greed, hate, and delusion. A man not only acts unskillfully in [114] a way that the wise would blame, not only breaks these four precepts, but also prompts another too to do likewise. That is also considered highly unskillful because you spread the evil through society still more, not only by your personal behaviour, your personal example, but by the advice that you give to others, the influence that you have upon others.

\_\_\_: Where does it say that?

S: So actually we've practically finished the text really, the main part of it, because there's so much repetition. So "the criterion for rejection" and "greed, hate, and delusion": these sections are really repeated, because you get "the criterion for acceptance" and the "absence of greed, hatred, and delusion" with just a slight permutation in the words. It's like changed from the negative to the positive. So you can really go right down to [section] 16: "the four exalted dwellings". And the four exalted dwellings - what are they?

Alan: "The disciple of the Noble Ones, Kalamas, who in this way is devoid of coveting, devoid of ill will, undeluded, clearly comprehending and mindful, dwells, having considered, with the thought of amity, one quarter; likewise the second; likewise the third; likewise the fourth; so above, below, and across; he dwells, having considered, because of the existence in it of all living beings, everywhere, the entire world, with the great, exalted, boundless thought of amity that is free of hate or malice.

"He lives, having considered, with the thought of compassion, one quarter; likewise the second; likewise the third; likewise the fourth: so above, below, and across; he dwells, having considered, because of the existence in it of all living beings, everywhere, the entire world with the great, exalted, boundless thought of compassion that is free of hate or malice.

"He lives, having considered, with the thought of gladness, one quarter; likewise the second; likewise the third; likewise the fourth; so above, below, and across; he dwells, having considered, because of the existence in it of all living beings, everywhere, the entire world, with the great, exalted, boundless thought of gladness that is free of hate or malice.

"He lives, having considered, with the thought of equanimity, one quarter; likewise the second; likewise the third; likewise the fourth; so above, below, and across; he dwells, having considered, because of the existence in it of all living beings, everywhere, the entire world with the great, exalted, boundless thought of equanimity that is free of hate or malice."

S: So what is the Buddha talking about here?

All: The four brahma viharas.

S: The four brahma viharas. So you notice how he makes the transition to these. He says "The disciple of the Noble Ones, Kalamas, who in this way is devoid of coveting, devoid of ill will, [115] undeluded," and also, "clearly comprehending and mindful, dwells, having considered, with the thought of amity," that is to say, metta. So first of all he has made it clear to the Kalamas that they knew really what was skilful and what unskilful, what blamable and what praiseworthy, what would be good for them and what not, which was the absence of greed, hatred, and delusion. So having realized that and having practised, they can go a stage further, they can be mindful and they can develop these higher more positive emotional states. And here, why is the Buddha bringing this in? Because he's, as it were, saying, well, my teaching, unlike those of these other brahmanas and sramanas that you've been disturbed by, who've been arguing about it with one another, these are things which you can verify for yourself. These are things within the range of your own experience. So there's no question of any doubt, there's no question of any uncertainty, because you can experience them for yourselves.

So he's made the transition from ethical life, which they can experience for themselves, to meditative life, higher states of consciousness, which they can experience for themselves. So when it's a matter of experiencing these things for yourselves? How can there be any doubt? How can there be any uncertainty? What need for any discussion?

In other words he is lifting, he's removing, the whole discussion to a plane where nothing needs to be discussed, where there doesn't have to be any doubt or uncertainty, because you have your own personal experience.

Nagabodhi: It is extraordinary. In a way it's a sort of bringing everything down to earth but actually it's absolutely adequate. I'm just thinking of the festival of mind and body. That's actually all you need to do. Just look at each stand and ask yourself, well, does it make sense? You don't really have to go further than that. Does it fit in with what I can conceive of as being worth it?

S: So the Buddha is, as it were, saying the one thing about which there cannot be any doubt or uncertainty is your own mental state, your own experience. So his teaching relates to such things.

We could at this point have a discussion about metta, about mudita, about all the four brahma viharas, but we don't really have time for that and in any case they have been gone into on other occasions. The crux of this sutta is clearly the Buddha's criteria for rejection and acceptance.

\_\_\_: What are these quarters?

S: North, south, east, and west. You sort of mentally direct your metta towards all the beings in the northern quarter, all the beings in the southern quarter, and so on. It's another way of practising the metta bhavana.

Nagabodhi: Something you very often hear people saying, actually, about your tapes, about their experience of Buddhism, it's all at the beginning, is that of all the various things that

impress people what seems to impress people most - it certainly impressed me most - was it just all made sense. It fitted in with what made sense. It's somehow a validation of sense. It's not something terribly exalted and mindblowing - it just makes incredible sense.

S: Well, the mindblowing bit comes later, (laughter) with the [116] Mahayana sutras.

All right, would someone like to read the next section: the four solaces. Solaces translates the term very badly. I looked this up, it isn't really solaces. It's something more like expectations.

Vajradaka: "The disciple of the Noble Ones, Kalamas, who has such a hate-free mind, such a malice-free mind, such an undefiled mind, and such a purified mind, is one by whom four solaces are found here and now.

"Suppose there is a hereafter and there is a fruit, result, of deeds done well or ill. Then it is possible that at the dissolution of the body after death, I shall arise in the heavenly world, which is possessed of the state of bliss.' This is the first solace found by him.

"Suppose there is no hereafter and there is no fruit, no result, of deeds done well or ill. Yet in this world, here and now, free from hatred, free from malice, safe and sound, and happy, I keep myself.' This is the second solace found by him.

"Suppose evil befalls the evil-doer. I, however, think of doing evil to none. Then, how can ill affect me who do no evil deed?' This is the third solace found by him.

"Suppose evil does not befall the evil-doer. Then, I, see myself purified in both ways.' This is the fourth solace found by him.

"The disciple of the Noble Ones, Kalamas, who has such a hate-free mind, such a malice-free mind, such an undefiled mind, and such a purified mind, is one by whom, here and now, these four solaces are found.

" - So it is, Blessed One. So it is, Sublime One. The disciple of the Noble Ones, venerable sir, who has such a hate-free mind, such a malice-free mind, such an undefiled mind, such a purified mind, is one by whom, here and now, four solaces are found."

S: I mentioned the word solace is not a very good translation. It's asa, which is often translated hope but it's more like expectation, that this is the expectation that one can have. So that the Buddha is not sort of - at this point at least or in this context - committing himself to whether there is a life hereafter or not. In a way he's saying it doesn't matter, because however it turns out you'll be all right if your mind is free here and now from greed, from hatred and delusion. This is what you can be certain of: that if there is a hereafter you'll be all right; if there isn't, well, you're all right here and now. (laughter) One can be sure both ways. This is all that he's saying. He's not committing himself to anything that cannot actually be proved.

You notice the Buddha doesn't bring in the transcendental. He gets only as far as this higher heavenly state. This is presumably because he's speaking to lay people [117] who are not perhaps concerned with the attainment of the transcendental. Anyway, read the conclusion.

Vajradaka: "Marvellous, venerable sir! Marvellous, venerable sir! As if, venerable sir, a

person who were to turn face upwards what is upside down, or to uncover the concealed, or to point the way to one who is lost, or to carry a lamp in the darkness thinking, 'Those who have eyes will see visible objects,' so has the Dhamma been set forth in many ways by the Blessed One. We, venerable sir, go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma for refuge, and to the Community of Bhikkhus for refuge. Venerable sir, may the Blessed One regard us as followers who have gone for refuge for life, from today."

S: This is a stock ending to a discourse by the Buddha. The person feels very very impressed as though something really new has been shown, that they've really learned something, and their response is to go for refuge.

Anyway, as I said the crux of the whole sutta is in fact in the middle, the ten criteria which are to be rejected.

Manjuvajra: Doesn't this ending also suggest that the people to whom he was talking moved into the dhyanas during the discourse.

S: Possibly.

Manjuvajra: Because they say so. It is when he's talking about the solaces he asked them if it's true that these solaces are found, and they say yes it is. That sort of indicates that they, there and then, were actually experiencing those things.

S: One could say that; one could argue that. But he does say it is possible. "Suppose there is a hereafter and there is a fruit, result, of deeds done well or ill. Then it is possible that at the dissolution of the body after death..." It is hypothetical. He is asking them to suppose. They don't know that there is a heavenly world; they only know that if there is a heavenly world and if they have behaved skilfully then their fate, so to speak, after death in that heavenly world will be a happy one.

Manjuvajra: He seems to give them a choice of four solaces. It's as though a person can choose any one of those four. It's like if you're in the dhyanas, if you're experiencing one of the brahma viharas, then whichever way you look at any possible outcome (of your life) it can only be good.

S: It can only be good, it can only be positive, yes. So any more general points arising out of what we've done the last couple of days?

Vajradaka: There's just one thing I can think of, about the fourth solace, is that suppose evil does not befall the evil-doer - well some people might think well evil-doers have more fun.

S: Yes, but trouble befalls the evil-doer in this life very often.[118] At least his mind is disturbed if he actually has done evil in the sense of something really unskilful.

Vajradaka: Is this referring to the next life or to now? The fourth solace.

S: "Suppose evil does not befall the evil-doer. Then, I, see myself purified in both ways." I'll see what the text says... It doesn't seem altogether clear, this purified both ways, in what sense is that meant?

Subhuti: One way or the other, I thought it might mean.

\_\_\_: You can't lose. (pause)

S: Ah yes. If you act unskillfully, then if there is a hereafter you will suffer because it is one of the characteristics of the unskillful to bring future suffering. But if there is no hereafter there's no future suffering. So if future suffering is part of the definition of the unskillful, then the unskillful in this life is not the unskillful. So you're purified of the suffering both ways. (laughter) Yes.

Manjuvajra: Not quite.

S: You're purified from the unskillful being the unskillful, because the unskillful is unskillful in this context only in relation to a future state in which you suffer for the unskillful which you have committed. I think perhaps you can't take the Buddha altogether seriously here. Sometimes there is a touch of irony in what the Buddha says which is rather masked by the translation. Do you see what he's getting at?

Nagabodhi: If your notion of unskillfulness depended, say, on an authority outside of you, like God or heaven or...

S: No, no not that, but that the unskillful is that which naturally issues in suffering, especially suffering after death, when you reap the results of your karma. So if there is no life after death, well, then the question of suffering after death doesn't arise. So you're purified of that, you go free of that. But if the idea of future suffering is necessary to the idea, the concept of the unskillful itself, then in the absence of that future state the unskillful will cease to be unskillful.

So you're purified from, or freed from, that too. You're purified or freed both ways. So in that case also, Kalamas, you don't have to worry about it.

\_\_\_: If you believed that you'd do away with the whole concept of unskillful.

S: Yes. I think one could say that for ancient Indian thought, certainly at the time of the Buddha, there was no conception of the skilful as relating only to this life, and that therefore it was believed that if you gave up belief in a future existence then there was no ethical sanction possible. This seems to have been the general view which the Buddha seems to have accepted, because it was well known that sometimes you did things which harmed other people but you don't receive any punishment in this life.

Manjuvajra: But on the other hand it is quite obvious that some of the things, the unskillful things you do in this life, you do [119] receive punishment, as it were, for in this life.

S: Yes you do. Sometimes you see the direct consequence of your unskillful action.

Subhuti: Would the consequence of (?) be something like saying, if it's true that no evil, no pain, follows on unskillful action, then there's no harm in acting unskillfully. Would something like that follow?

S: There's no harm in acting unskillfully. Well there's no harm in the sense of harm befalling you in a future existence, but there will still be the possibility of some harm befalling you in the present existence.

Nagabodhi: Is this suggesting, though, that therefore actions are not intrinsically skillful or unskillful? I would have thought that is the case in Buddhism.

S: I would say that broadly speaking, from what I remember of the literature, the Pali texts seem to waver between two points of view. Perhaps because one is the actual Buddhist point of view and the other is perhaps a sort of concession to current modes of thinking, that on the whole there seems to be a sort of wavering, to use that term, between the idea that an action is skillful or unskillful by virtue of its intrinsic nature, the effect it has here and now on your own mind, and on the other hand, that an action is skillful or unskillful on account of the future suffering or happiness that it inevitably brings about.

Nagabodhi: What about a third factor, which would be the suffering, say, that your actions make to others? Or does that not come into it?

S: That does sometimes come into it. That appeals, as it were, to your altruistic sentiment. That could be a third consideration that appealed to your humanitarian feeling even in the absence of any sanction in the form of karma.

Manjuvajra: That does seem to be quite a difference doesn't it? The Eastern idea of morality does often refer back to yourself, whereas Christian morality nearly always refers to the other.

S: Yes. Well, Christian morality, to the extent that it inherits Judaic morality, seems to be sort of legalistic. One thinks in terms of a moral law and of punishment for infringing that law, and one thinks of course of a lawgiver. There are certain stock passages in Buddhist texts, Pali Buddhist texts, to this effect - the sort of minimum requirements of the religious life in the ordinary sense as distinct from the path of the transcendental - that you believe in the law of karma, that willed actions do have consequences; that you believe in natural distinctions in society, for instance especially with regard to sexual relations, especially it is mentioned that you accept that you do not have sexual relations with blood relatives, with mother and sister, that you observe a certain distinction there, unlike animals that do not allegedly. And also that you recognize that in the world there are beings who have attained a higher transcendental state. These are the minimum sort of religious requirements for the ordinary person, that is to say the [120] person who within that sort of context is aiming at simply a happy rebirth after death, who isn't thinking in terms of nirvana.

Very often you get the description in a negative form, that such and such person has no belief in the fruits of karma, does not believe in the distinction between one who is mother and one who is not mother - that is to say in sexual matters, and does not believe that there are in the world beings who have realized a higher transcendental state.

Manjuvajra: The other two seem to me to be quite important, but why is the sexual one so important?

S: It relates to the incest taboo which seems to be characteristic of human society. According to some biologists the incest taboo is of great genetic and evolutionary significance, indirectly

of ethical significance. There's something about it in Darlington that you can read up if you like. I've referred to it in my little essay on Buddhist morality which perhaps you haven't read. (pause while Bhante looks for the essay) I've given a quote from Buddhist scriptures. [See *The Priceless Jewel*, pp.32-3, tr.]

Vajradaka: I met a girl who was incested by her brother when she was young and it had quite a strong effect on her.

S: Yes, the Buddha is describing a future state of affairs when the moral basis of society has disintegrated and he says "among such humans the ten moral courses of conduct (i.e. the ten 'ways of skilful action') will altogether disappear, the ten immoral courses of action will flourish excessively; there will be no word for moral among such humans - far less any moral agent. Among such humans, brethren, they who lack filial and religious piety, and show no respect for the head of the clan - 'tis they to whom homage and praise will be given etc., etc ... Among such humans, brethren, there will be no (such thoughts of reverence as are a vow to intermarriage with - that's my explanatory addition) mother, or mother's sister, or mother's sister-in-law, or teacher's wife, or father's sister-in-law. The world will fall into promiscuity, like goats and sheep, fowls and swine, dogs and jackals" etc., etc. [Digha Nikaya iii. 72-3, tr.] and I comment on this here it is interesting to see that one of the things that accompanies the disintegration of the moral basis of society, and therefore the collapse of society itself in the true human sense, is sexual promiscuity, including incest. I gather there's a fashionable modern interest in incest in the arts at present, If such is indeed the case we could expect to find that the reverse process - the creation by man of a truly human or morally based society - would be accompanied by the institution of the incest taboo. According to Darlington this is exactly what we find. "Some races of animals prefer to mate with their likes; others with unlike. In these circumstances, human stocks which varied towards the rejection of incest would have, not at once but after a few hundred generations, an advantage over those who favoured or allowed incest. For they alone would be variable and adaptable" Then my explanatory addition: "i.e. because they practised out-breeding and not in-breeding" [then] "They alone would do new things and think in new ways. The future would be with them." [C.D. Darlington, *The Evolution of Man and Society*, 1969, p.53, tr.] In other words - this is me carrying on - human society cannot develop unless man is variable and adaptable, and he cannot be variable and adaptable without the incest taboo. Morality, at least to the extent of the incest taboo, is necessary to the very existence of human society even, [121] genetically speaking. Morality is part of the very definition of humanity.

Nagabodhi: Just wandering back in the discussion - you've placed a great emphasis on ... well, in the absence I suppose of us having a background of belief in rebirth, traditionally anyway - you've placed great emphasis on the Buddhist approach to morality being intentional and psychological. Would you say that in a sense that that is almost a departure from strict tradition?

S: Well no, that's a very moot point. There are scholars who believe that the Buddha did not in fact believe in rebirth. It has been argued; and certainly one can say that if one looks at those passages of the Pali canon which seem to be the ancientest, there is less and less reference to, much less still emphasis upon, rebirth, because the Buddha is pointing to the path to nirvana here and now in this life, without any question of a future rebirth. Do you see what I mean? And this is why I sometimes say - and I've said this often before - that if people ask does a Buddhist have to believe in rebirth, well, the answer is no provided you're willing

to gain enlightenment, or try to gain enlightenment, in this life itself.

So one can say that the historical Buddha, as far as we can tell, in so far as the attainment of enlightenment was concerned - and that was what he was primarily concerned with after all, - does not speak in terms of rebirth or in terms of moral sanctions extending over a series of lives, because he's not concerned with you extending yourself over a series of lives as you've been doing in the past but of getting out here and now.

Abhaya: Just after the enlightenment, or just before, - I can't remember - in the Pali accounts you have the Buddha recalling all his former births, which seems to point to definite evidence of rebirth.

S: Yes, but again one can ask, well, where does that account come? Is that account found in the oldest parts of the scriptures? One has to start evaluating these different accounts of what happened when the Buddha was enlightened. That question arises too.

Abhaya: It may be a later interpolation?

S: Possibly. One can't jump to that conclusion. Obviously that mustn't be used as an easy way out of an argument or a difficulty, but it certainly has to be considered. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that Buddhists eventually did come to consider rebirth as an integral part of the Buddha's teaching, well, when they came to speak of the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment they would obviously think of it in that sort of way, or even attribute to the Buddha himself expressions which assumed that particular way of thinking. There are references to the Buddha's gaining of enlightenment in the Pali canon which do not bring in the question of rebirth.

But anyway, what we were really talking about was whether the ethical, whether the kusala and the akusala, derived their sanction, as it were, from themselves in the sense of their effect on the human mind here and now, or from their consequences in the future by way of karma, and as I said there seems to be in the Buddhist texts themselves a sort of - well maybe wavering is not the word but a sort of shift of [122] emphasis between these two points of view.

But in this passage, in this sutta, the Buddha makes it clear that even if there is no future so far as this sutta is concerned, he allows it to remain an open question that if there is rebirth, yes, the fact that you behave skilfully will stand you in good stead, and even if there isn't a future life you will not have lost anything by acting skilfully in this life itself, because that acting skilfully will be its own reward, so to speak. So perhaps one has to give weight to both of these ways of looking at things. They aren't really alternatives.

We won't go into the question of the relativity or reality of space and time because karma implies the reality of time also. But anyway we don't have time for that. (laughter) All right, leave it there and I hope that you have some material for whatever you want.

Voices: Thank you Bhante.

[end of seminar]

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