

Sangharakshita in Seminar

The Karaniya Metta Sutta Seminar (Second *Transcriptions* Edition)

Id on: 29-30 July 1978

Venue: Padmaloka, Norfolk.

Those Present: Sangharakshita, Lokamitra, Padmavajra, Priyananda, Mahamati, Kovida, Mike Scherk, Mark Lane, Nick Nixon, Kularatna.

Sangharakshita: Karaniya Metta Sutta, or Metta Sutta as it's also called; metta being translated as loving kindness here. As you see, it consists of ten verses, and we've got two whole days, that is to say four study sessions, to get through it in - two and a half verses per session. So this means that we're going to go through each verse really thoroughly and I suggest if anybody has got any idea or any question or any doubt at any stage, to bring it up, bring it out into the open so that we can thrash out that particular matter, and in this way go through the whole sutta really thoroughly and in some detail. [*Pause*]

All right, first of all about the title. It's called 'metta sutta', but what is metta? I think this is the first thing really to be understood, at least in a provisional way, because metta is mentioned later on. Metta is best translated as 'friendliness', and this is of course Pali. The Sanskrit equivalent is *maitri*, and in each case the word comes from another word meaning friend, *mitta* or *mitra* - one being Pali, the other being Sanskrit. So metta is the sort of feeling that you usually have towards a friend, but carried, as it were, to quite a high pitch of intensity. We don't really have any English word to translate metta. Love is much too ambiguous. With us, love covers what in Pali is covered by at least two distinct words, *pema* and *metta*. *Pema* is more attachment-love, and *metta* is friendly love, or the love which is identical with friendliness. In metta there isn't any suggestion of the erotic, whereas in the case of *pema* there is. [*Pause*]

So metta is, as I have said, friendliness carried to the highest possible extent. It's friendliness to the *n*th degree. So one of the questions which arises, one of the questions which has to be discussed is, - how can you tell metta? What are its characteristics? Its chief characteristic is said to be an ardent desire for the welfare of the particular person, or creature even, sentient being, that happens to be its object. The sign of metta, in a way the unfailing sign of metta is that you're deeply concerned for the well-being, the happiness, the growth, the prosperity of the person, or even the living being, we might say, who is the object of your metta. In other words, your interest in that particular person is not a self-interest, it is disinterested. You *could* even say, if you wanted to use the word love, that metta is disinterested love, and [2] love as we usually understand it is, of course, rarely disinterested. So, disinterested love. Friendliness is disinterested love. It's a desire for the well-being and the happiness of the person towards whom you feel that disinterested love, or that friendliness, or that metta.

So do you begin to get some idea as to what it means? At the same time it's very strong, it's quite ardent as it were. When we use the word friendship or friendliness in English it usually suggests something quite warm or *lukewarm*, tepid, but the word metta doesn't suggest that in Pali, it's a strong feeling. In our case, usually we don't experience any strong feeling, any strong emotion, unless there is an element of self-interest involved, or unless there is an element of attachment or even of possessiveness. We rarely experience a strong emotion which is, as it were, disinterested, which is calm. But metta is an emotion of that kind.

Mark: Doesn't friendliness sometimes suggest an exchange - people are friends, but one person can't be friends with somebody else without...

S: One might say that you can't be friends unless you feel friendliness to begin with, but because you feel the friendliness you are not necessarily friends, because to be friends, as you say, implies a sort of reciprocity. For instance you can do the metta bhavana, and you can do it with complete sincerity, and effectively, and *feel* metta, but the person towards whom you're directing it may not even know about that.

Mark: That's why I think metta goes beyond friendliness in its usual...

S: It can manifest as friendliness in a sense. It can work out in practical terms as a reciprocal thing, because you may quite sincerely devote yourself to someone else's well-being, they may have the same feeling for you, and may devote themselves to *your* well-being - in this way it becomes reciprocal. You can speak about a friendly relationship, or a relationship based on metta or even on kalyana mitrata, but to start with you have to have that friendly feeling, that feeling of metta, as an emotion within you, and it can as it were just stop short there, so far as any actual forming of a friendly relation is concerned. You could, for instance, help someone without their knowing it by, say, putting in a good word for them here or there or even help them financially by sending money without them knowing it. There wouldn't be any friendly relationship, but you'd be feeling friendliness and acting upon that. So, you *can* have metta, you can have the friendly feeling without the friendship in practical terms. But you can't have the friendship in *this* sort of [3] sense without the feeling of metta to begin with. And as you say, ordinary friendship very often doesn't involve metta in this sense. Although it may have a sort of germ of it, a spark of it, a potentiality which could be developed. But certainly not anything like the intensity of metta as it's understood in Buddhism. One doesn't want to make a complete split between as it were 'worldly' friendship or friendliness, and this, because this is still mundane for quite a long time. So it's more a question of a difference of degree than a difference of kind.

Kovida: Maybe that links up with the Greek word *philos* as in philosophy.

S: It probably comes quite close to that, because it suggests philosophy is a disinterested love of wisdom.

Kovida: They've got Eros for erotic love. (*Unclear*)

S: Yes, right, because in the case of wisdom, you're not interested in wisdom, you don't feel the love of wisdom on account of any practical utility. Wisdom in a sense is completely useless, so you're not concerned with it for practical purposes, you're concerned with wisdom as it were for its own sake. So that is *philea* - that's a bit similar to the metta. As far as I know, as far as I remember, in Pali, one wouldn't speak of metta directed towards any such abstract idea as wisdom or truth. It does seem to be very much an emotion which is directed towards living beings, especially human beings.

And another characteristic of metta that we'll come across in detail shortly, is that it is not limited; it doesn't have any tendency to limit itself to a particular object. In other words, it isn't exclusive, whereas ordinary affection is usually exclusive - the more you feel towards one, the less you feel towards another, or the less you have for one, the more you have for another, and so on. But in the case of metta, the fact that you have it strongly towards one particular person doesn't mean you have it less towards somebody else. In the end metta has to become universal. It has to be something you experience, at least as a feeling, towards all living beings equally. That's when metta develops to its full extent, its full intensity. So metta is an experience or an emotion of friendliness which is disinterested and also universal and also very intense, and characterised by a dedication to the welfare, the happiness and the well-being of its object, so far

as it lies in one's power. This is what metta is. So it doesn't really [4] correspond to what we call love. It doesn't even correspond, certainly in its more developed form, to friendship or friendliness in the ordinary sense. So it's strong, it's intense, it's disinterested, it's universal, and it has a tendency to fulfil itself in a practical kind of way.

Lokamitra: It has a tendency to fulfil itself in a practical kind of way?

S: Yes. That is to say that it doesn't simply *wish* well towards other people, it doesn't merely *wish* that they may be happy, but so far as is possible it tries actually to *help* them to be well and to be happy. [Pause] I think instead that it probably wouldn't be a bad idea if we sort of naturalised this Pali word *metta*. We do often speak of the metta-bhavana, we don't speak of the cultivation of loving kindness normally, do we? - we just say metta bhavana. But probably this is one of the few Pali words or Sanskrit words that we could well naturalise in English and use, because we don't really have a word which means this kind of thing.

Mike: I was told that *mitrata* means friendship too; what's the difference then between *mitrata* and *metta*?

S: *Mitrata* is Sanskrit, but *mitra* is the abstract noun. *Mitra* is friend in Sanskrit, so *mitrata* would be friendship. As, say, in *tathata*, where the *ta* makes the noun an abstract noun. So this particular sutta deals simply with metta: it's called the Metta Sutta. Perhaps we should think of it as a poem, it is actually in verse, not in prose. Sometimes, by the way, metta is translated as 'good will'. That conveys quite a bit of its meaning, though again it isn't quite emotional enough, but it's not a bad rendering of metta. Good will, as when you have good will towards somebody, you have disinterested love for them, you wish them well, you would like to help them, you even try to help them, that is your good will towards them.

Kularatna: It's very weak, though, isn't it - good will?

S: Compared with the Pali word, yes. Perhaps it's significant that our words for the more refined, as we might say spiritual, emotions, positive emotions, are so weak. The words which we have for the comparatively unrefined emotions, or even negative emotions, are quite strong. Like hate, anger, fear, despair. These are all quite strong words. Even *love* is quite strong. But when it comes to the more refined, more positive, spiritual emotions, it's as though the words that we have [5] for them become weak and tepid.

Mark: That's because presumably we say a strong emotion is a negative one.

S: Yes, yes. Because we don't very often experience an emotion which is completely positive, and skilful, and which is at the same time very strong. Our strong emotions tend to be negative emotions, our positive emotions tend to be weak emotions, unfortunately.

Lokamitra: Just for the sake of this seminar, could you define a skilful emotion, as we're going to be talking about it?

S: Well, a skilful emotion basically is one that is dissociated from *loba*, *dosa* and *moha*, that is to say dissociated from craving, ego-centred craving; from hatred, which means a confirmed and settled dislike of somebody and a willingness to do them harm - not just a momentary burst of anger; and *moha*, in the sense of mental confusion and bewilderment, and wrong misguided thinking. [Pause]

Nick: I can never remember which Pali words correspond to greed, hatred and delusion. Can you

give them?

S: In Sanskrit, *loba*, *dvesha* and *moha*, and in Pali it's *loba*, *dosa* and *moha*. *Dosa* instead of *dvesha*.

Nick: *Loba* being greed?

S: *Loba* being greed. Again it is a very *strong* word. It's greed, craving. The word *loba* is used in modern Indian language, *lobi*. If you are a very greedy person they say, 'Oh you are a real *lobi*', a really greedy person. If they see you just sitting there and eating so many sweetmeats, licking your fingers, all that kind of thing, they'll say 'Oh he's real *lobi*'. [Laughter] One should also say, with regard to metta, that there is something ecstatic about it. In trying to emphasise its positivity and its ardour as it were, that there's something ecstatic about it, it carries you as it were outside yourself, which is what ecstasy literally means, it means to be carried outside yourself, to *stand* outside yourself. So metta when fully developed has a sort of ecstatic quality about it, while remaining quite calm and balanced and harmonious. [Long pause]

S: All right then, so now let's come on to the first verse of the sutta: [6]

He who is skilled in his good and who wishes to attain
that state of calm, nibbana, should act thus.

This is the first half of the first verse.

Karaniyam atthakusalena yam tam santam padam abhisamecca

So 'skilled in his good'- *atthakusalena*, this is a quite important expression. 'Good' is *attha*. It means good. It also means goal. One's aim. There is a sort of connection between one's good, and one's goal or aim, do you see this? Something can hardly be your goal or your aim in the true sense unless it is also good for you, unless it is also your good. But here the suggestion is that the aim or the good is the *ultimate* good or the *ultimate* aim, for the sake of which all lesser goals or all lesser goods exist. I think that it's Mrs Rhys Davids who in some of her writings about early Buddhism makes the point that early in the Buddha's teaching career, the word *attha* was very much in use, I don't know if anyone's ever come across this point - that *nibbana* wasn't much used, *bodhi* even wasn't much used, but the *attha* was very much referred to. There are quite a few traces of this in the Pali Texts as we have them at present. It's the Goal with a capital G as it were. For instance, it might be asked, why does somebody leave home, why does somebody Go Forth, or why does somebody meditate? It's for the sake of the *attha*, the Goal, the aim, the good, in that highest sense. It's not exactly an abstract term, it's rather general, it's not too specific; in that sense, in that way it's a useful sort of term, it just conveys a sense of something higher, something even ultimate, towards which you are making your way, which is your aim, which is your goal, which is your *good* also. Do you get the idea? That *attha* means all this.

So 'he who is skilled in his good', literally 'by the one who is skilled in his good', *atthakusalena*.

Lokamitra: *Karaniya*, what does that mean?

S: 'Should act'. But we will come to that in a minute.

Lokamitra: Yes.

S: Or 'let him act'. So 'skilled in his good'. You know here you get this word skilled, *kusala*, or here *kusalena*. *Kusala* is just quite literally skill, in the first place, the quite ordinary sense. You speak of someone being skilled at handicrafts, someone being skilled in the way. This word 'skilled' is very important in Buddhism, as well as in its abstract form, skill. [Pause] It roughly corresponds to what we would call in English that which is good. [7]

Padmavajra: It comes from the word *kusalena*, does it?

S: Yes. Well, *kusala* in general. *Kusalena* is only another grammatical form. His *kusala*, skill, or one who is skilled, and *kusalena*, by one who is skilled. So it's rather interesting that Buddhism should have this word 'skilled'. There isn't anything like this, say, in the corresponding Christian tradition. That the good person in a way is the skilled person, the person who does things in the right way, avoiding what we would call negative emotional states, cultivating positive emotional states, cultivating clarity of vision. In other words Buddhism would say that the spiritual life is not so much a matter of goodness, it's more a question of skill. So what does skill involve or what does it suggest when you speak of spiritual life in this sort of way?

Priyananda: It implies a degree of intelligence.

S: It implies a degree of intelligence, and also a sort of practical capacity. It clearly isn't just a theoretical thing. There's intelligence required, but also practice. So skill or skilful implies both of these. So 'skilled in his good'. So what does that mean, what does that suggest - someone being skilled in his good? It means someone knowing what is really good for him, and also knowing the right way to go about attaining it. One who is 'skilled in his good'. [Pause] But you notice the sutta doesn't say the 'good man' or the 'holy man' - it says simply 'he who is skilled in his good'. So you get none of the sort of usual, as it were, religious connotations here. Simply the one who knows what constitutes his real good, what constitutes the real good for a human being, and who knows the right way to go about realizing that, *karaniyam*, should act in such-and-such way, should behave in such-and-such way.

So then the text goes on to be a bit more specific about that *attha*, that good, what constitutes a man's good or his goal. *Yam tam santam padam abhisamecca* 'That state of calm, *Nibbana*' *Nibbana*, by the way, is the translator's gloss, we may say, the original simply says *santam padam*. *Santam* is the same as *shanti*, in Sanskrit, it's peace. *Padam* is a state or an abode. It's the abode of peace, or the state of peace. It's the same word as you get in the title of the *Dhammapada*. If you like it's the peace factor. *Pada* also literally means that. [Pause] So this might be paraphrased as saying, He who is skilled in his good, that is to say in the state of calm, *nirvana*, and who desires that, should act thus.[8]

Or one might say simply, He who is skilled in his good, and wishes to attain - *abhisamecca* is wishes to attain - the state of peace, or the abode of peace, should act thus.

So why do you think that this word peace has been selected here? When the nature of the goal is amplified, or when the nature of the goal, the *attha* or the good, is specified in greater detail, why is *shanti*, why is peace especially mentioned, do you think? Why shouldn't it say *bodhi*? I mean leaving aside metrical considerations and so on. But why peace?

Mike: We can only experience metta as that peace.

S: Yes, yes certainly.

Kularatna: It's something that everyone has got some experience of, they might not have any

experience of wisdom at all, but they have some of peace.

S: But even so, of course, one would only have some experience of *mundane* peace, so one could say the same thing about wisdom, when one would have some experience of *mundane* wisdom at least. But that doesn't fully answer it, therefore.

The goal is clearly being contrasted with what is not the goal. So if the goal is specified as peace, then what would one say corresponds to that, in that which is not the goal? How would then that which is not the goal, or is presumably one's present state, be mainly characterised? In other words, what is the counterpart of peace?

Mike: The disturbed (*unclear*) turbulence?

S: Disturbance, turbulence. That's right. So what would be the Buddhist term for that.

_____ : Dissatisfaction.

S: Dissatisfaction. In other words, *dukkha*. So actually, in Buddhist literature, *shanti* corresponds to *dukkha*, or *shanti* is the as it were counterpart of *dukkha*. *Dukkha* is the state of dissatisfaction, disturbance, turbulence, dis-ease, and when all that calms down, when all that *dies* down as it were, and when the root of that, the cause of that, is permanently eradicated, then ensues the state of peace, which is defined as peace in contradistinction to that disturbed state by which it was preceded, and in the cessation of which that peace itself consists. So *shanti* is strictly speaking the cessation of *dukkha*, the cessation of *dukkha* is known as *shanti*, as peace, tranquillity. [9]

Lokamitra: Isn't one of the Buddha's titles the *Shantinayaka*?

S: Yes. The one who leads to peace. So that aspect of the goal, or of our own good wishes most relevant to us, inasmuch as we are in a state of dissatisfaction or unsatisfactoriness, even suffering, is peace, which represents the cessation of all that, the dying away, the fading away of all that. Let me just look up the exact meaning of *abhisamecca*. [Long pause]

It's not so much like 'wishes to attain', it's more like 'proficient in'. Who not only wishes to attain, but who knows or understands the *way* to attain, who is proficient in, or proficient in the way to, should act thus.

Mark: Should we understand that as an integral instruction, or as a way of identifying...?

S: Ah yes, that's quite important, *karaniyam*. It's - what do you call it - there's a grammatical term for this. What mood would that be? He *should* do, he *ought* to do. It's not the imperative mood.

Mark: The conditional?

S: The conditional.

Mike: The evocative?

S: No, it's the conditional really. Let him do. Or this should be done by him if he wishes so-and-so. Now, sometimes it is said - this raises quite an important point - that the Buddha's teaching is hypothetical, or conditional, not imperative. Do you see the difference? Supposing for instance one has somebody who claims authority, either because he is the representative of God,

or prophet of God, or something of that sort, what does he say? He says 'Do this!' In other words this is my order and you are to carry out that order. But supposing somebody said, 'If you want so-and-so, then this is what you should be doing in order to get it, ' then this is the hypothetical or conditional statement. The person only shows you what you should do if you want to obtain something. So it's said that the Buddha's teaching is like this. The Buddha says, 'Here is suffering. If you want to get rid of the suffering, then this is the path that you should follow.' The Buddha doesn't simply come along and say 'Do this' or 'Do that' in an [10] authoritative sort of way. He does claim to have experienced the truth of what he says for himself, but he doesn't because of that come with, as it were, an order, saying 'Do this' or 'You must do this' or 'You must do that.' He says 'If you want to attain so-and-so, if you want to realise so-and-so, or if you want to get rid of so-and-so, this is the path you must follow, as I know from my experience.' So that is the great difference. So the *karaniyam* is, as it were, hypothetical; it is conditional. It does not represent an order given, but a conditional statement, a statement which is conditional upon what you want to do. You've got to make up your mind whether you want to get rid of suffering. If you don't, the Buddha's teaching is irrelevant as far as you're concerned. If you're quite happy as you are. By translating the *abhisamecca* as 'who wishes to attain that state of calm' it makes the hypothetical nature of the statement more clear. So do you appreciate the difference between these two ways of speaking, as it were? If someone says, 'Do this' or if on the other hand someone says, 'If you want to realise such-and-such, then you should do that.' So what is the difference, what sort of difference do you feel?

Padmavajra: It's more practical. It's much more in touch with the situation. And it's sort of like the Buddha's pointing and like the prophet of God's pushing.

Kovida: There's a much greater objectivity in the hypothetical one, because you almost get the feeling that he *has* seen it clearly, and he knows what the condition is, and it doesn't really matter. I mean he sees it so clearly that he can tell you what to do, but if you don't do it, it doesn't really matter to him at all.

S: Right. Yes. He has no self-interest in your doing it. You don't bolster up his position in any way by obeying him, or doing what he suggests. It doesn't make any difference to him, in a sense. Whereas when people say 'Do this', 'Do that', it's more as though you've got a personal, even an emotional investment in it.

Also the conditional or hypothetical statement appeals more to your intelligence, whereas the categorical statement doesn't appeal so much to your intelligence, but more to your desire, perhaps, just to be told what to do.

Mike: On the negative side it sort of appeals to your fear, really. If you don't do as you're told, you've got the spectre of punishment and guilt. That's very Western.

S: Yes, right. [11]

So this brings up a point that we went into quite a bit on our last seminar, last week, which is this whole question of authority, in the sense of power over, coercive power, yeah? A statement made in a *spiritual* context should not sound like, or should not suggest, anything authoritative in that sort of sense, the group sense as it were. If it does, to that extent then it isn't really true to itself. In other words, in the spiritual context, there cannot be anything like force. There cannot be anything like compulsion, because the spiritual life consists in you as an individual developing, and especially developing your own awareness, your own consciousness, your own sense of responsibility, so how can you be forced to do that, it's a contradiction in terms? So any sort of statement that seems to be trying to get you to do something by force, to compel you, by

definition cannot be a spiritual statement or cannot be *motivated* spiritually. So where there is force, or where there is power, to use that word in that sense, there cannot be any spiritual life, or spiritual teaching.

Kovida: The hypothetical statement as well implies being beyond - because it's only when you're beyond that you can see the situation clearly, whereas with the imperative statement, somehow you're still in it, because you haven't seen it clearly.

S: Right, yes. You're still involved in it.

Priyananda: One would get that from, say, reading the ten commandments, one gets that impression of a black and white situation.

Mike: I don't follow actually, the difference between hypothetical and ...

S: Well, maybe it's more in the sense of being more detached, it's more calm, more objective. Matter of fact.

Kovida: Before you can see what the alternatives are in a situation, you have got to see that situation clearly, and to see it clearly you've really got to be outside it, before you can see what conditions are in it.

Mahamati: Whereas prophets of God are...?

S: Well, they're emotionally identified, even a bit inflated, you could say. But what it means, to put it in one's own terms, supposing that you yourself have the experience of [12] having to get somebody to do something. If you're rather impatient and you want to get it done quickly and you're a bit hasty, you might just say, 'Do this, get on with this!', and if someone asks you 'Why, how?', you don't really want to go into it. You don't *feel* like going into it. You feel it's a nuisance that he wants to know why he should do it, and how to do it; you just say, 'Get on with it!' But if you're sort of calm and patient, you'll say, 'Well look, this is why it needs to be done, so this is the way to do it. If you'd like to help, well, please get on with it'. You're much more detached from the situation, you are therefore much more patient, and you can put it more calmly and more clearly. But if you're emotionally involved and all het up, you'll just tend to give orders as it were. I mean, this is leaving aside the objective, say, question of time factor - in an emergency even the calmest person, while remaining calm, may have no time to give anything other than orders. But that is a rather different situation. But if in a situation where, yes, there is time to explain and to get someone to understand what is to be done, so that they can do it *with* understanding, if in that situation you're just impatient and just want to tell him to do it, that illustrates what we're talking about. So sometimes it's as though the prophet-like people, and I've met some of these people - they haven't got the patience to discuss with you and sort out. They just want to order, and that means that they are not willing to examine their own motives for telling you to do what they're telling you to do. If you try to raise the question of the why, why they are telling you that, they often get quite upset and angry.

Kovida: Because they don't know.

S: Because they don't know very often. Or they think they do but really they don't. And they just seek refuge in authority - 'Well, this is what the Bible says', or 'this is what God says'. I remember in this connection when I was in Pune, staying with my friend Dr Mehta, a Seventh-Day Adventist couple came to see me. The husband was Indian, but the wife was English and she seemed a bit more sensible, and they managed to get through to see my friend Dr Mehta, and the

Indian Seventh-Day Adventist pulled out his Bible and said, 'Look, don't you see, look the Bible says it, God says it', and he was so sort of clear that it should be enough that the Bible said it and that God said it, that you should obey it without [13] further question. But then my friend Dr Mehta was objecting to these statements, of the Bible and of this Seventh Day Adventist preacher, and the chap was arguing, 'Well look, don't you see? Don't you see?', and he was putting the Bible right under his nose, 'This what the Bible says!' And his wife sort of pulled him by the sleeve and said, 'But dear, the gentleman doesn't accept the Bible.' [Laughter] But he couldn't see that. To him it just wasn't anything that could be argued. So one finds that very often if one is unwilling to discuss something, or clarify the reasons, very often the chances are, or the possibility is, you don't *know* the reason, you're only emotionally motivated, emotionally impelled in a way that you are unconscious of and that you don't want to have examined.

Kovida: There's so many assumptions that you haven't questioned.

S: So many assumptions that you haven't questioned. So therefore we find that it has been said, certainly in the ease of the Pali scriptures, all the Buddha's statements are hypothetical. They are conditional. They are not categorical. The Buddha doesn't say 'Do this!'. He says, 'If you wish to attain such and such, do such and such.'

So here it says, 'He who is skilled in his good, and who wishes to attain that state of calm, nibbana, should act thus.' If you're not skilled in your good, if you don't particularly want to attain nirvana, well, all right, it doesn't concern you. I mean, the Buddha might reason with you but he wouldn't try just to force you to accept and to follow. So this gives a completely different attitude, a completely different feeling, to Buddhism as a whole, the whole tradition. Yet it's quite remarkable that if you meet Buddhists in the East, and especially if you meet monks, who might be considered to be rather more into Buddhism than the lay people, even if they are not sort of very spiritually enlightened, they've got this calm easy-going approach, if you tell them that you are not a Buddhist they're not personally offended. [Laughter] They don't mind! They are quite willing to be friendly none the less. But if you meet a Christian, and you say that you're not a Christian, he is personally offended. And it's the same with the Muslim. If you tell a Muslim that you are not a Muslim - especially if you are a worshipper of images - he's not only personally offended, he thinks that *God* is offended, that it's an insult that you've offered to God in, as he would say, worshipping an image. So we get so used to the Christian attitude towards religion we really lose sight of the fact that there are *other* attitudes, and other approaches, especially the Buddhist one. In the West, to be of a different religion is to be an enemy. That is not so as far as Buddhists are concerned.[14]

They may think that you're wrong, oh yes, they may think that, I mean there's not any woolliness of thinking, or 'What you think is just the same as what we think so it doesn't matter'. It isn't that. They'll be quite clear in their own mind about their own thought, their own philosophy; they'll be quite sure in their own minds that your outlook is wrong, but they don't feel threatened by that in a personal way, that you differ from them. But they won't react with hostility if they learn that you follow a different faith. They won't mind. They might be quite concerned to explain something about Buddhism to you, especially if they notice that you're not looking particularly happy, a bit miserable, but they won't be emotionally disturbed by the fact that somebody else is not a Buddhist, and that's a quite remarkable fact, when you consider the history of Christianity. Christians have tended to be deeply disturbed on learning that somebody else follows another religion. There's no place in Christianity or Christian thought, for anyone who is not a Christian.

Mark: It seems to imply that they have their doubts.

S: It seems to imply that they have their doubts, yes, which they don't want brought out into the open. It's not perhaps that the Buddhist has no doubts, but he is quite willing to *examine* his doubts. There's nothing in his religion that teaches him that to doubt is wrong or is sinful. If anything he is *encouraged* to think and to understand things for himself.

Padmavajra: I remember reading a Mr Chen booklet once and he reckoned the Buddha preferred people who actually asked questions and sort of really went into the Buddha's teaching with the Buddha and talked about it and thought about it rather than people who just walked straight in. I don't know if that was Mr Chen's particular...

S: It was a bit, but none the less it reflects something of the spirit of the Buddhist approach. So in order to be able to have a discussion with a Christian he must be less of a Christian in a way, if you see what I mean?

_____ : Less of a Christian.

S: Yes. [15]

_____ : Has to be liberal as well.

S: Has to be liberal, and to that extent, not a Christian at all.

Kovida: So you could say that it's impossible to have a discussion with Christians?

S: You could say that, yes, if you actually do manage to have a discussion, the chances are that he's on his way out already, even though he may not know it. Because the Christian basically can only confront you with authority, ultimately with *God's* authority.

Mahamati: That's assuming that orthodox Christianity is the Christianity.

S: Well, one does. What other Christianity is there? Where? [*Laughter*]

Mahamati: Certain Christian orders ... that maybe you wouldn't have that sort of authoritarian attitude,

S: But again where are they? There are very few, very small groups but when one speaks of Christianity in general historically, one just has to mean the main Christian churches; Christianity means the Catholic church, the Orthodox Church, Church of England, the Baptists, the Methodists; they number their followers in hundreds or millions. There are little groups that *we* would regard as more acceptable, though I would say less Christian really, and more often than not quite *woolly* in their thinking like the Quakers and the Unitarians who are really already half way out. They cling on to a *bit* of Christian terminology.

Mark: I was reading last week's, I think, *Sunday Times* and I think it was an Anglican theologian who was of the opinion that Christ was not actually God and it's quite a radical departure.

S: Oh yes.

Mark: You wonder where it gets him.

S: Well I mean, orthodox Christians themselves do say that if you deny the divinity of Christ, you're not a Christian. Those churches which do not accept the divinity of Christ, and there are

just a few tiny ones like the Unitarians, are not accepted as members of [16] the World Council of Churches. You have to believe in the divinity of Christ, and there are very few in fact who don't. So once you start not believing in the divinity of Christ, then you are already, as I've said, on your way out and if you follow that line of thought to its logical conclusion you should leave the Christian religion because if Christ is not God, by what authority does he speak? He certainly isn't represented in the Gospels as appealing to sweet reasonableness. He's even represented as getting quite angry when people don't accept what he says or find difficulty in believing. So if Christ is God incarnate and if one believes in God, well, surely one should accept what he says because it comes from God. But if he is not God incarnate then where does he come from? What is the authority for his teaching? You might say 'Well, he was a very wise and good man', but, then all right, there are lots of *other* wise and good men, whereas there was only one incarnate son of God according to orthodox Christian teaching. So he therefore presents a unique authority and power which he doesn't possess simply as a good and wise man, so that doesn't really help you very much. All right, you might say the Buddha was a good and wise man, let's compare them. Maybe the Buddha was wiser and gooder! [Laughter] So where does *that* leave the Christian? [Laughter] - who still calls himself a Christian. He can't carry on if he's rejected the divinity of Christ, you can hardly fall back on authority. So it seems to me there's no halfway house really between orthodox Christianity in any of its major historical forms and not being a Christian at all. The whole structure is so tightly interlocked that as soon as you give up one bit of it, it's like dislodging a stone on the mountainside, the whole thing starts coming down on top of you. Because people aren't very logical, aren't very rational, they try to stop half way. They are held back by their emotions which are still involved with Christianity.

Mahamati: But if one distinguishes between mundane perfections and transcendental perfections, could it be that Christ was - it seems that his mundane perfections were quite imperfect because his teachings, one might say, were quite misleading and inadequate - but it's not so easy maybe to judge the transcendental ones.

S: But you see one says Christ, but who on earth is one talking about? One doesn't really know. One has got the record in the gospels and in some other apocryphal sources, but do all those sources refer to one and the same historical character? I mean, one [17] assumes there is a character such as Christ that one knows all about like one knows about Napoleon or Julius Caesar, but that is itself not proved. That is one of the very things that have to be gone into. To what extent is this figure a composite figure made up of a Hebrew Rabbi of that time with messianic pretensions and a sort of mythological figure blended with it; the saviour who is slain and who comes back from the dead, etc? The figure of Christ as it comes down in tradition is definitely a composite figure, and we're not quite sure what bits of this are really historical. No doubt there is *some* historical nucleus of at least part of it, but we can't as it were, talk about Christ or try to make statements about Christ without settling first of all this question of how much of this composite traditional Christ-figure is really historical. Otherwise it's like saying, I wonder how Christ felt when he rose from the dead? You can't just take the whole thing literally and then try to experience it realistically. [Laughter] Christian tradition said he rose from the dead, all orthodox Christian churches believe this, and ascended into heaven; so if one takes this literally and treats it naturalistically, how did he feel? How did it feel to go up into heaven? Do you see what I'm getting at? You can't sort of talk about Christ as a historical figure accepting virtually what tradition says about him and takes as historical.

Mahamati: Well, if one was saying that he wasn't a God, would it not be in line with Buddhist teaching then, different Bodhisattvas would have different abilities to express teachings. We might say that Christ, if what we hear about him is more or less true, maybe his ability to teach was very limited, which maybe explains Christianity. The way he put things was quite misleading and impractical.

Padmavajra: That doesn't sound like a Bodhisattva to me.

Mahamati: Well, Bhante, is there not a distinction between mundane perfection and transcendental perfection which will include an ability to teach?

S: But then again according to the Mahayana it is sort of really part of the definition of a Bodhisattva that he is provided with *upaya-kausalya*, skilful means, and these include all sorts of mundane arts and sciences and knowledge and equipment - not as it were purely spiritual or transcendental things.[18]

Mahamati: That's much more the Arhant.

S: Yes, you could even say that. This is one of the great points made by the Mahayana, that the Bodhisattva knows about all sorts of worldly things just to give him some sort of *bridge* from the transcendental to the mundane, and as was said about Marpa in the life of Milarepa, he knew everything from the art of realising Buddhahood to how to mend or patch broken earthenware. That's the Mahayana sort of ideal. So if one tries to look at Christ as a sort of imperfectly equipped Bodhisattva, that isn't really very helpful because a Bodhisattva is as much likely to be equipped with mundane knowledge as transcendental knowledge because he takes steps to equip himself in that way because he knows he will need that sort of knowledge in dealing with ordinary people. Again, of course, one could say 'How does one take the Buddhist teaching about the Bodhisattva?' Isn't one perhaps taking *that* too literally to begin with?

Mahamati: Why would that be?

S: Well, maybe not distinguishing sufficiently clearly between the archetypal Bodhisattva representing a sort of personified aspect of the Buddha nature and actual historical individuals who may embody those qualities to a very limited extent, even those within the Buddhist tradition. Even within the Buddhist tradition historically, does one really find people functioning as Bodhisattvas in that sort of full or glamorous kind of manner that one finds described in the Mahayana sutras? Do you see what I mean?

Mahamati: Well, that seems to open up a whole new area.

S: Well, yes, no doubt it does. But what I'm trying to get at is, say, the case of making comparisons with Christianity and trying to fit Christ in and find some sort of place for him as clearly one has to do, one cannot as it were, to begin with, naïvely take the figure of Christ exactly as it has come down to us in the Christian tradition, and try to fit *that* in, because that figure is composite and the product of a quite different approach to things. An approach to things quite different from the Buddhist one. You have as it were, if you can, to dismantle all the Christian trappings and try to get back somehow or other to who or what Christ really was, historically speaking, before one can really say anything meaningful about him from a Buddhist point of view. But to get back to the historical Christ, bypassing the things that the churches *say* about Christ or [19] the Christian tradition says, is very difficult because apart from the Christian tradition we have no independent information about Christ, and the Christian tradition, mainly in the gospels, and the Pauline epistles, is so much almost inextricably mixed up with obviously mythological material, it's very difficult to separate the two and find out who or what Christ really was.

Mike: Could that criticism be levelled at the Buddha as an historical figure?

S: Yes.

Mark: That there's no separate...

S: Yes, but in the case of the Buddha, in the case of Buddhism there are far more scriptures, obviously deposits of material at different periods. In, say, the case of Buddhist scriptures, there was information for about 500 years, so you can see quite clearly if you compare the *Udana* in the Pali Canon with, say, the *Saddharma-Pundarika Sutra*, these are separated by about at least 400 years, you can see that gradual process of - it's not exactly mythologisation, because one can see a sort of symbolic spiritual meaning there, but you can see that you're not concerned with historical fact - and there were many among the Buddhists who sharply distinguished the historical Buddha from what they felt other schools were merely inventing about him. So if you go back to the early texts like those of the *Sutta Nipata* and those of the *Udana*, the *Itivuttaka*, and some of the other Pali texts, you do find a quite sort of historical figure without any admixture, or very little admixture, of anything that we would regard as mythological. But in the case of the Christian gospels you start off with the mythological. You see what I mean? You can't see the historical developing into the mythological in those scriptures themselves. You can't get behind the mythological. Some Christians make a strong point of this and say, well, if the Christians believed from the very beginning that Christ was God, he must have been, because it isn't a question of Christ originally being a human teacher gradually divinised by his followers, but he was recognised as God right from the beginning. That is an argument. So then you can say either the immediate followers were mistaken or maybe Christ himself was mistaken in that case. But actually the current sort of tendency amongst scholars seems to be to regard Christ as a Hebrew teacher who inherited a great deal of ethical teaching from the Rabbinical tradition, who probably believed himself to be the Messiah, but who did not believe [20] himself to be God incarnate because that was a conception quite foreign to his milieu; that became as it were grafted on some time later, but before any Christian scriptures were put into writing so that the scriptures give us the fully fledged God-Man as it were, and we can't get behind that. There's no independent source. But if we had, for instance, writings coming down from Palestine or Rome, giving us the point of view of people who had known Christ but who didn't believe in him as the son of God and didn't follow him, then we have an independent source - we don't have that. We've only got the Christian records which give us the orthodox Christian point of view already - that is to say Christ as God, but we can't go behind that. We have to sort of analyse those documents and discover discrepancies, and inconsistencies and bits and pieces of evidence that have been overlooked or suppressed or half suppressed, by the Christians, and then just piece through together. And that is what Biblical scholars and New Testament scholars are supposed to try to do now. They, for instance, discovered, at least they believe they discovered, that behind some of the Gospels there was a document which has not come down to us, but on which some of the Gospels draw - a sort of compilation of sayings of Christ, to which some biographical information eventually got attached. This is called the Q document by scholars.

But what I'm trying to underline is that this whole question of Christ is more complex than we usually think. It's not as though we do know Christ from history as we know, say, Charles II or we know Alfred the Great, and we've therefore simply got to take what has come down in history and make up our minds about him. No, we have to as it were criticise and disentangle what has come down, because it hasn't come down in history in the secular sense. It's come down in the Christian tradition. So we cannot accept that at its face value, and then sort of superimpose as it were our Buddhist views upon that. That isn't possible. I mean the figure of Christ is much more like, say, the figure of Merlin than like the figure of Julius Caesar. I mean the figure of Merlin is a composite figure with some nucleus of historicity perhaps, but a lot of the legends that come down to us in the Merlin book and the other sources are clearly sort of myth, and that cannot be taken very literally. It's quite like that in the case of the life of Christ, and perhaps we'll never be

able to disentangle it completely, it may not be possible. Anyway, scholars are having a pretty good go. So I think it's quite important for a Buddhist to realise this, because I'm often asked by Buddhists what we think about Christ and where Christ fits in; well, one cannot give a straightforward answer to this because the question presupposes a very naïve approach to [21] the Gospels and to history in general.

There may be certain individual statements or teachings that we can reject because we disagree with them, or accept them on their own merits, but that is quite a different thing. I think when we're asked about Christ in the sense of the figure that comes down to us in the gospels and in the Pauline epistles and in the book of Revelations and in the orthodox Christian tradition we cannot accept that because it isn't just history - it's history plus myth - and the myth we can't accept. We might accept it as myth, as having a symbolical truth, but the Christian will not allow you to accept it just as myth in *that* sense. The Christian will demand that you accept it as historical truth. Yes? That God was incarnated, that he was crucified for the sins of the world, that he rose again from the dead on the third day, that he ascended into heaven. This is Christianity.

Anyway we tend to replace that by some sort of diluted version and try to discuss Buddhism in relation to that, but that isn't very useful because very few people, hardly at all, really accept that diluted version. That exists only in the imagination, perhaps, of a few people.

Mahamati: You mean people who accept that as myth and call themselves Christian on that basis?

S: Yes. And of course a lot of Christians nowadays, especially clergymen, feel very much on the defensive. They won't give you the full-blooded version of Christianity if they think you're a non-Christian. They'll soft-pedal a bit, but you go and listen to them in their church on Sunday and they might well give you that full-blooded version or at least you'll get it in the hymns and in the words of the service. So it's as though they try to have their cake and eat it too, and many of them don't know *where* they stand, whether they believe it really or not. But if you no longer believe it literally, you're no longer a Christian in the full historical sense, because a Buddhist can accept the crucifixion and the resurrection from the dead as myth and symbol, surely - they're quite effective symbols - but not as historical fact. Whereas the Christians believe that if it isn't historical fact, it is nothing as it were, because St. Paul says that if Christ did not rise from the dead, meaning in the literal sense, our faith is vain.

I [22] think you could say that probably the biggest sort of general movement in Christianity taking place at present is simply this dissolving of Christianity as dogmatic fact, reducing it back to myth and poetry. But this is going to make Christianity completely different from what it has been all through its history so far, make something better perhaps and something also more akin to Buddhism, but quite unlike our orthodox historical Christianity.

I mean take the virgin birth. Orthodox Christians believe that Christ was born of a virgin, by the special interposition of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, so therefore Christ was born not as a result of sex which meant sin, but born in purity, born of a pure virgin, without sexual activity being necessary. Because he was the son of God, it was only appropriate that he should be born in that way. He came to *save* men from sin. So in that case, how could his very coming be associated with sin, it had to be *free* from sin. So a Christian has to accept this literally, that literally as a matter of historic fact, the mother of Jesus conceived him without having any sexual relations with a man, as a result of a miracle. This is what the Christian teaching is. Now we can accept it symbolically meaning that for the Christ Spirit, the higher consciousness, to be born in one, one must be pure. One can accept that.

Mark: He can hardly be the son of God if he was the son of someone called Joseph.

S: But he *wasn't* the son of Joseph.

Mark: Precisely, but if he had been, then he couldn't possibly be the son of God.

S: He couldn't have been the son of God, and it has been pointed out by scholars that at that particular time the Mediterranean religions were full of saviour gods who were born of virgins and who were killed by their enemies, who came back to life, miraculously resurrected, and who were commemorated in banquets where sometimes bread, sometimes wine, sometimes other things, were partaken of, as part of the body of that slain divinity. It's a very common pattern around the whole Mediterranean [23] area and the figure and the life of Christ have been sort of assimilated to *this* in part. It's very clear and easy to see. So certainly one can accept the *poetry* of it and the truth of the poetry, but not as sort of historical-dogmatism as one might call it. But then the strength in the way of Christianity, if one can call it even strength, down the ages, has been that it insisted on the *historicity* of all this, that it did actually happen; that its truth is historical truth, even scientific truth, as well as poetic and spiritual. And this is the great crux for Christianity nowadays. Whereas in the case of Buddhism it's true, Buddhism has got any amount of myth and legend and symbol, but it isn't taken literally in that sort of way. And belief in it isn't essential to salvation. I mean, for instance, even in the Pali Canon we've got these stories of the Buddha walking up and down in mid-air, and emitting simultaneously or alternately, very quickly, water and fire. Do you have to believe this in order to be a Buddhist? No. Most Buddhists do believe this, but if pressed they give a symbolical significance; no, you don't have to believe it to be a Buddhist. You can dismiss it. You can say, no, that's nothing to do with Buddhism, that's just an addition to the scriptures. No one minds in the least. You're just cutting off a bit of embroidery, that's all. I mean, some people like the embroidery, so those that like it can have it and enjoy it, but nobody has to have it. And many, many bhikkhus don't accept these things as actually having happened. Some do, but whether they do or whether they don't, no one regards them as of central importance and no Buddhist *has* to believe them or *has* to accept them. If you find them acceptable and inspiring - fine - you accept them. But if you find them a bit embarrassing, well, discard them. What makes you a Buddhist is Going for Refuge and following the Eightfold Path, not believing any stories of this sort about the Buddha.

I mean, the fact that the Buddha, in the scriptures themselves, is represented as saying, 'Whether Buddhas come or whether they do not come, one thing is fixed and sure, which is that out of craving arises suffering.' Now there's something you can verify for yourself. Whether Buddhas come or whether they do not come, doesn't make any difference. So the figure of the Buddha, though very inspiring and in a way central, isn't central to belief in a doctrinal sense in the way that the figure of Christ as the son of God is central in the Christian tradition. And it's true that the Buddhists have glorified the Buddha and they've made him a symbol for ultimate reality itself in the Mahayana, but he still remains firmly a human being none the less, an enlightened human being, and any individual Buddhist can become an enlightened human being if they only make the effort [24] and follow in the footsteps of the Buddha as it were. Not following the footsteps of the Buddha because it's the Buddha but because it's for your good, because you can see that that is a skilful thing to do. So there's quite a big difference between Christian attitudes and Buddhist attitudes in this way. *[Pause]*

Anyway, let's get on a little bit. So 'He who is skilled in his good and who wishes to attain that state of calm, Nirvana, should act thus'. And the verse then starts telling us how such a person should act. *[Pause]* 'He should be able, upright, perfectly upright, obedient, gentle and humble.' *Sakko* - let me look up that word, which is translated here as 'able'. I think it also means sort of

vigorous and [*cough smothers word - possibly 'skilful'.*] [*Long pause*]

Yes 'able', 'able to do'. So do you think that has any significance, the fact that the first quality, or first adjective is 'able'? What does it suggest?

Lokamitra: He's got to have his energies going.

S: He's got to have his energies going. He's got to be capable. What does this suggest about the spiritual life in general or someone setting out on the spiritual life, what does it tell you about him?

Lokamitra: It's kind of knowing what you're doing, what you're letting yourself in for.

S: Not only knowing, it's more than that.

_____ : You've got to be prepared to do things, in practical terms.

S: You should be what we would normally call a capable sort of person, so it suggests that the whole approach to what we would call spiritual life is sort of very matter-of-fact, very practical. It doesn't say you should be pious - it doesn't start off with that - that you should be *able*. In other words, someone setting out on the path of the higher evolution, to put it in more modern terms, should be a capable sort of person; intelligent, active, practical - that's the sort of person you want. He should be able. You don't want a fool, you don't want a nincompoop, you don't want a milksop, you don't want any weak-kneed or knock-kneed person, you want someone who is *able*, who is capable. You want an adequate human being - this is what you want to begin with. You don't want someone who's [25] weak or dependent or anything like that. You want someone who is able, who is a capable person. You don't even want a sensitive soul, not yet at this stage - just someone who is able. But don't you think that is significant? You want good human material.

Mike: They must be psychologically sound.

S: Psychologically sound. Not crippled, not hampered or hindered by any sort of emotional complications.

Kularatna: The question then arises, what do you do with people who come along who are in that sort of state?

S: Well, you try to make them able. [*Laughter*] If you like you can try to make them able, if you think you've got the time and the energy and you think that's a good way of spending it, or you just have to show them the door and ask them to come back later when they are more ready. But what you mustn't do is think that they are able when they are not, to think that someone is really able to start on the path of the higher evolution and to start being an individual when the poor chap just isn't. He's so weak, and so decrepit and so emotionally dependent, and so lacking in self-confidence, he just hasn't got a chance yet. You've got to build up all *those* qualities first. Yes? So you mustn't sort of deceive yourselves that because he's coming along and maybe sitting and trying to meditate or doing some puja that he really is ready to embark upon the path of higher evolution - no. He's got to be capable to begin with and that implies self confidence. And a lot of people who will be coming along will not fall into this category. All right, don't stop them coming along, help them as much as you can, but have no *illusions* about them.

Kularatna: This suggests a lot of demands are being made on somebody who tries to follow that path, even quite early on.

S: Which path do you mean?

Kularatna: The path of the higher evolution.

S: Well, of course. But it is a path of higher *evolution*. So you've got to be a healthy, capable, reasonably normal, self-confident human being to begin with, and not everybody who comes along to a Buddhist meditation centre falls into that category - believe *me!* [Laughter] [26]

Padmavajra: Is it so cut and dried as that, I mean. I don't feel I'm particularly capable a lot of the time. I don't feel that I'm not aspiring to following the...

S: Well, oh no, it says to be capable, this is to begin with. You should at least be able to look after yourself, and manage your own life and make your own way in the world. At least you should be able to do this.

Padmavajra: Yes, but I mean you could sort of - I feel I'm not kind of in that position totally. You know. I don't feel I'm totally capable. I feel there's a...

S: Well, to the extent that ability is a mundane quality it cannot be total in the unconditioned sense. That isn't expected. You're not *infallibly* capable, even when you're capable. That isn't expected - just reasonably.

Mike: Don't you think that the practice of meditation will tend to help a person become more...

S: Oh yes, certainly, yes. But that only means that not everybody who is meditating, and meditating even in a way that is quite helpful to them, is necessarily yet able in this sense. Meditation for them may have more or less a psychological significance. It's giving them some peace of mind or maybe building up their self-confidence, enabling them to sort out their problems and so on. But they may not have come to the point, even yet, of being *able* in the sense that the term is used here.

Mahamati: It seems to be something that everybody isn't able to do all that much yet - to maintain contact with people who want to meditate, just for the psychological benefit, they seem to lose contact somehow...

S: Our resources are limited, I mean our resources in manpower or womanpower. So one just has to think where one can best put one's energy. And someone who has got a sort of psychological patient, they take a lot of looking after. They require a lot of time, a lot of energy. And one has to consider whether in a way it's worth it, or whether that same time and energy would not be better spent, helping, if that is the word, someone who *is* more able because they'd be able [27] to do more with that time.

Mahamati: Somewhere in between the perhaps even mentally-ill person and the person who's ready to get involved in the higher evolution very quickly, say after a six-week course, I thought in future it would be good if we had longer-term meditation courses, so people could just take longer, maybe a year, to just come along to meditation, and then maybe they're ready for the higher evolution.

S: Well, one would just have to see whether in fact there *were* such people and whether they would continue to come along in that sort of way. One could only experiment, after surveying the field. I've known people who have been meditating for years and years who were meditating

when I came to England in '64, who are still meditating, not with me, but they don't seem to have got anywhere at all. They still seem to be just where they were. One or two of them I'm still in contact with, a few more I hear about, they don't seem to have got very far.

Lokamitra: This verse implies a sort of ethical direction, would you say that? As opposed to a purely psychological one?

S: Not necessarily. Perhaps the ethical comes with the next adjective - upright, *uju*, but it just says *able*, capable. I think maybe we should just take that in a quite ordinary, straightforward human sort of sense. The person who is the proper candidate for the higher evolution is just a capable person. First of all he's got to be that, just capable, just in a broad, general sense. If you're capable, you can turn your capability in almost any direction. If you've got a capable Order Member, what does that mean? Well, if necessary he can lead a meditation or he can give a lecture or he can organise a retreat, or he can give someone personal advice or he can write a letter, or type. That's your capable Order Member. He can turn his hand to almost anything. So a capable person, a capable human being, is rather like this. He can go out to work or not. He knows how to do a bit of gardening, he knows how to do a bit of carpentry perhaps; confronted by any particular difficult situation he can cope, he can manage, he can get by. He knows how to maintain himself, can look after others if necessary. That's your capable human being. So that's the sort of person you've got to have to begin with. It doesn't matter if the person who comes along as a candidate for the higher evolution has read about Buddhism or not read about Buddhism, or he's been in the mystical scene or he hasn't been in the mystical scene, or he's studied philosophy or he hasn't studied philosophy, or he's into the arts or not into the arts. That doesn't matter, that's quite irrelevant, that's quite secondary. The first thing according to this sutta is that he should be *capable*, he should be able, he should be a human being who is, as it were, an effective member of society. Not an old crock, not one of the casualties of society. Not that the casualties of society should be neglected, but it's the able, sooner or later, who will have to look after them. They themselves do not, at the moment, as it were, directly qualify for the higher evolution. But perhaps they can be *helped* to qualify. So do you get the idea? You get the spirit as it were? And this is, if you read the Pali scriptures, the sort of people who came along to the Buddha, and went forth, as what now we would call monks. They weren't people who had been especially into religion or meditation or spiritual life. His first sort of big group of disciples, they were just what we would call young playboys. *[Laughter]* Well, weren't they? Yes. The first *five* were ascetics, but not the ones who came [29] immediately after that, were they?

Mahamati: Where did they come from?

S: They came from Benares, didn't they? They were out having a good time and the Buddha met them. *[Laughter]* He gave them a better time than ever. *[Laughter]* It was Yasa and his companions, all from wealthy merchant families, and they'd taken their wives picnicking and one of them, I forget which one, whether it was Yasa or somebody, hadn't got a wife. So they found somebody for him for the occasion; a lady who was willing to accompany in that sort of capacity, and she made off with some ornaments, didn't she? - and they were looking for her and then the Buddha asked them, 'Is it better to look for the woman or to look for yourself?' Full of symbolism you could say, that little episode. *[Pause]*

All right, enough about that then. He should be able. He should be capable, and then what follows? - Upright, *uju*. *Uju* means simply straight. Well, we all know what is meant by straight. If you say of someone, 'Oh he's straight', what does that mean? What does that convey?

_____ : ...don't play games.

S: They don't play games. Anything else?

_____ : Not devious.

S: Not devious. Yes. Straightforward, honest, open, and the Pali word is simply straight, *uju*. It's the word that is used for the shaft of the arrow, that is straight. It's quite an ordinary word, it's not an especially ethical word or technical word. So first of all he should be capable, then straight, a straight sort of person. This is again *very* much emphasised in Buddhism. People should be straightforward, or as you said not play games. But why do you think this is so important, why is it stressed, why does it come here as the second of these qualities?

Mahamati: If one is trying to contact reality one's got to start from the beginning.

S: From the beginning, yes.

Mahamati: From what one is now. [30]

_____ : Yes, straightness comprises no delusions, about yourself or others, what you do...

S: No inhibitions. no blockages. It also implies self-confidence. Just straight. And there is *suju* which is translated as perfectly upright. It's more like *really* upright, *truly* upright. *Suju* is *well* upright.

_____ : We often say straightforward.

S: Straightforward. Happily upright. But anyway, perfectly upright, that probably is a quite good translation. But why do you think there's this emphasis: not content with saying upright or straight, the Buddha says *perfectly* straight? Well, it's as though he says let there be no doubt about it. Let it be really absolute, absolute straightness, no exceptions, no compromises, no rationalisations. Be *perfectly* straight, not just straight, *perfectly* straight. It's so easy to compromise, so easy to rationalise, he's saying as it were. We all know that. It's so easy not to speak the complete truth or not be completely honest; just to compromise a little is to dilute your honesty a bit. You reconcile, you say, 'On the whole I'm quite honest, so it doesn't really matter, I just dilute things, just soften things a bit.' Maybe I don't want to hurt somebody's feelings. You might rationalise in that way. But what could be the different forms or the different spheres of this straightness or this perfect straightness? In what sort of aspects of life would it show itself?

_____ : Communication.

S: Communication.

_____ : Dealings with people.

S: Dealings with people principally in one way or another. Social. Business. Economic. If you apply this strictly in your economic life, your business life, it probably could raise all sorts of complications.

Lokamitra: Just getting on with whatever you're doing.

S: What would it imply about you emotionally, that you were straight?

_____ : Lack of alienation. [31]

Kularatna: Relatively integrated.

S: Reasonably integrated, yes. The, as it were, more positive side.

Padmavajra: No *really* negative emotions. I mean, presumably you might have [Laughter] ...

S: Yes, you might be straightforwardly angry, or straightforwardly lustful or straightforwardly afraid, and not attempt to conceal it, just acknowledge that.

Padmavajra: Like guilt, resentment.

S: Yes, it would certainly cut out all those sorts of emotions. It would imply a sort of healthiness, wouldn't it? [Pause]

Sakko uju ca suju ca suvaco ca'ssa mudu anatimani. Here we come up against the translation in a way. *Suvaco* literally means well-spoken. Maybe there's something missed out here because *suvaco* is definitely well-spoken. Maybe check that.

Padmavajra: You've got soft-spoken in here.

S: Soft-spoken, yes. *Suvaco* - well-spoken, happily-spoken, gently spoken. Yes, *suvaco*, then *assa*. What is *assa*? One of the meanings of *assa* is hope but it can't mean that. [Pause].

One meaning of *assa* is horse, but it certainly doesn't mean that. [Laughter].

S: Chalmers has gracious-speech for *suvaco*, but *c'assa* to escape everybody. What does Woodward say? Have you got Woodward? Can you look behind and see *Some Sayings [of the Buddha]*, that golden volume, see what Woodward says.

Lokamitra: 'You must be able and upright and truly straight, gentle of speech and mild, not having vain conceit of self.'

S: *Mudu* seems to be translated as gentle. *Anatamani* [32] is humble and *suvaco* is certainly of soft or gracious speech, but that leaves out the *assa*, which no one seems to have translated, maybe because it is just so difficult.

Padmavajra: Would that be the 'obedient' in *this* text?

S: It could be, but how does it, unless it is something to do with horse, obedient like a horse - but *assa* means for instance shoulder. It means a shoulder bag. It means a point or a corner. (*Unclear*) a compound verb - (*unclear*)-*assa* - horse. *Assa mudu* could be... [Laughter] ... as a compound. [Pause]

Kovida: ... between shoulder and yoke, to carry?

S: It could be. Yoke. Let me just look up *mudu* in case the two go together as one word. [Pause]. No, there isn't any help there. It seems as though Saddhatissa in translating has taken *assa* as obedience, but he has missed out the speech, hasn't he? So let's go into it. *Sakko uju ca suju ca suvaco* which means of gracious speech, of happy speech, of good speech, soft speech. So why so you think *that* comes next? One needs to be capable, one needs to be straight, in fact perfectly straight, but also of soft speech, of gracious speech. So why does *that* come next? What are

straightforward people usually like in this respect as regards speech?

_____ : Blunt.

S: They're a bit blunt. Yes? So what might that lead to, of a slightly negative character?

_____ : Lack of caring.

S: Lack of caring, harshness, insensitivity to people's feelings. So it's as though one is reminded that even though one is expected to be straight, in fact *perfectly* straight, one should at the same time be gently spoken, well spoken. One's communication with others should not be abrupt or harsh. We might even find some people pride themselves on being straightforward and blunt but it's just a sort of excuse for being crude and insensitive, you might say.[33]

Mike Scherk: When you are harsh in speech, it has a black effect on your mind and on the way you... particular spots too.

S: Yes. You feel sort of crude.

Priyananda: It seems here, this is almost the sort of beginning of the training, one is actually starting to do something, whereas before one might be just purely, one is able and one is upright maybe just the result of one's upbringing and one's conditioning.

S: Yes, that's true. One's positive conditioning, having been brought up in a positive group, as we say. Well, what do you think about *obedience* in this context? Taking the English word.

Kularatna: A bit odd, really.

S: It sounds a bit odd, doesn't it?

Nick: Could it be another safeguard against the effect of the straightforwardness, the uprightness?

S: I would suggest it's something more like - not exactly docility but amenability. Amenability. You don't mind going along with other people, their suggestions or ideas. You don't oppose them or refuse to accept them just because they are *their* ideas or *their* suggestions. You see what I mean? You're not submissive. You don't sort of give in easily. But you're not truculent.

_____ : You're easy-going.

S: You're easy-going in matters which aren't all that important, as it were. I think maybe amenable or reasonable, even, wouldn't be a bad quality in this connection. [Pause]

And *mudu* means something more like tender. According to the dictionary it's soft, mild, weak, tender. But clearly one can't take that literally in this context. I think it's something more like adaptable. An absence of stiffness or rigidity or hardness in your attitude. It's flexible, supple, vulnerable.

Kovida: Malleable.

S: Malleable, yes. Yes, malleable. [34]

Mark: Doesn't malleable suggest easily led?

S: Not necessarily. Not if you've got the capacity and the uprightness and so on behind you.

_____ : Does that require receptivity?

S: It could, but perhaps receptivity is a bit too refined for this stage. Maybe that comes in in the next quality.

Mahamati: It seems a more human quality or not necessarily what we normally associate with a religious life.

S: Yes, right. *Mudu* seems to suggest an absence of stiffness or hardness in your attitude; flexibility where flexibility is required, even adaptability. And then *anatimani* - this is translated here as humble. The word humble has got all sorts of connotations for us, hasn't it, of a Uriah Heep type perhaps. Uriah Heep said he was a very 'umble man. But its *anatimani*. *Mani* is more like pride or conceit. It's the same sort of root as the word 'mind'. I always say it's something like a lack of high-mindedness. Do you know the expression 'high-minded' in the sense of being high and mighty as it were? Not high-minded in the sense of idealistic. Haughty.

Padmavajra: A lack of an inflated attitude.

S: A lack of an inflated attitude. Not haughty would be better, I think, than humble. Humble isn't very heroic, is it?

_____ : There's a definite negative element in it. Not...

S: *Ati* means high or extreme. And *an-ati*, not here - not arrogant. Chalmers translates 'devoid of arrogance'. So what sort of picture emerges of this person who is able, straight, perfectly straight, softly spoken, flexible, amenable and devoid of excessive conceit? They've certainly got a sort of proper pride and self-respect, one might say, but they're not arrogant, not overbearing, have no inflated idea of themselves. So what sort of an impression do you get from this? What sort of person is this?

Mahamati: He can go far. [*Laughter*] [35]

S: What sort of impression would you get of them when you met them?

_____ : Very warm, healthy.

S: A warm, healthy impression. They wouldn't necessarily at *this* stage strike you as particularly religious in our Western Christian sense. That might by itself maybe give quite a suggestion for reflection. It almost as though the religious person doesn't really qualify as a Buddhist, if you see what I mean. It's very positive, quite strong, very *human* qualities that are described here. Nothing specifically 'religious' in the Western Christian sense.

Padmavajra: I get the feeling, the thing that comes to my mind is of normality.

S: Normality.

Padmavajra: Almost ordinary, and being with him is quite extraordinary.

S: Yes. Well, what do you think makes a person high-minded, in the sense that I've described? Or arrogant, or haughty? What does this represent?

Padmavajra: It's delusion.

S: In what way, delusion, in respect of what?

Nick: Their own opinions of themselves. They think they're much better than other people.

S: Yes, right, but it's not only that. It's your bearing with regard to others based on this delusion, isn't it? Because of this delusion you adopt a particular attitude towards other people.

Padmavajra: Actually probably it's because of a lack of confidence in yourself...

S: Lack of confidence. [36]

Padmavajra: ...because basically you feel inferior to somebody.

S: In other words it's sort of compensatory. But then the question arises, why should you feel inferior, leaving aside the possibility that you *are* inferior? [*Laughter*]

Padmavajra: Oh, he's always like that.

S: Anyway, the bell has gone so maybe we had better leave it there for this morning, having done anyway at least one verse, and don't forget what we're still leading up to - this is the way in which someone should act if he is skilled in his own good, if he knows what is really good for him, and wishes to attain the state of calm or Nirvana. This is how he should act to begin with. This is the sort of foundation he should lay. These are the sort of qualities with which he is expected to be endowed. So we start off on a healthy human level. All right, let's leave it there. We're having another study period in the afternoon, of course. In the afternoon we'll get on a little more quickly.

[Next Session]

S: So we've seen in the first verse that the one who is skilled in his good and who wishes to attain the state of calm, or the state of peace or abode of peace - in other words Nirvana - should be able, straight, perfectly straight, softly-spoken, flexible - what else?

_____ : Amenable.

S: Amenable and devoid of conceit. So the next verse goes on to describe further qualities with which such a person should be endowed, that is to say the person who is skilled in his good, and wishes to attain the state of peace. He should be *santussako*. This means simply, contented. Contentment is quite an important quality, quite an important positive emotion and positive state. What do you think it really means to be contented, if one is content?

Lokamitra: To accept the situation in which one is.

S: Yes, to accept the situation which one finds oneself in.

Mahamati: I was going to say it's more than just like just bearing [37] things - you actually felt them.

S: Yes, it isn't just bearing things. It suggests that you're content with yourself or within yourself, so that you don't depend so much on external things and are therefore more likely to be content when things are very simple and ordinary as it were. You don't need anything special or excessive in order to compensate for some lack or some want within yourself. Contentment in a way presupposes or at least suggests individuality, doesn't it? Do you see the connection? In what way? What is an individual?

Kularatna: Well, it's one who is really content in himself.

S: An individual is one who has, as it were, a being of his own. His being, that is to say, is not dependent so much on external circumstances, or on the group. He finds a sort of satisfaction within himself in the experience of his own being, so he's content in this sense, in this way,

_____ : You see *santussako* - does that mean, is *sant* related to *shanti* - peace?

S: No, I think not, no.

Nick: Is there a particular connection meant here with the third precept?

S: Yes, because sometimes it's said that the positive counterpart is contentment. The third precept being abstention from, it's usually translated sexual misconduct, and the positive counterpart, the positive principle involved is contentment with your present as it were sexual or marital status. Do you see the connection? So, supposing you are married, then you don't have an irritable sort of dissatisfaction which may sort of look out beyond what you've actually got in that particular way. You're content, you're satisfied with what you have, with what you are. It also suggests a sort of state of happiness, that you're happy with what you are, or with what you've got, relatively speaking.

Kovida: Is it any relation to content, the word contented? Is it related at all? Content meaning the contents of something?[38]

S: I rather doubt that. Usually words which seem to be connected because they sound or look alike, aren't.

Kovida: I was just thinking that if they were...

S: There is a possibility.

Kovida: Because then you would be content with your contents.

S: Yes. With the contents of your own being.

Kovida: Yes. Simplistic.

S: But don't you think being contented has a near enemy?

_____ : Complacency.

S: Complacency, or self-complacency. What would that be more, that sort of state?

Mike Scherk: It's got a blindness attached to it, when you're complacent. You're not content with what you *really* are, you're content with - what you think you are or wish you are.

Nick: Quite smug.

S: Smug. You're not just content with what you are or the way you are; you sort of regard it as final in a way. You're somewhat attached to it

Kovida: There's nothing more to get from it, you sort of stop there.

S: You sort of congratulate yourself on being the way that you are, with no thought of being or becoming anything more than that. *[Pause]* The contentment suggests a sort of healthy, non-neurotic enjoyment of oneself or of one's own state of being. You see that? And its far enemy would be a sort of dissatisfaction with oneself, resulting in an attempt to obtain satisfaction from things external to oneself. Well, there are certain things external to oneself which can give one a certain satisfaction, but here what is implied is that you are looking to other things for that satisfaction which you should be getting from your own being. Do you see what I mean? For instance if it's a nice sunny day, you can enjoy the sunshine. You're not [39] expected to get sunshine from your own state of being. You see what I mean? So in that respect you can quite healthily, as it were, rely on the sun for the sunshine. That would not be neurotic. Though possibly you could get a situation of that kind which did become neurotic, but normally that would not be neurotic, your reliance upon the sunshine, because it's not the sort of thing you can supply yourself with, but there are other things which one should be able to provide oneself with, psychological and emotional things, and for those things you should not have to rely upon others. In respect of those things you should be content with and within yourself. One might say that any attempt to find externally those things which you should be able to provide yourself with is misplaced or even neurotic, one might say. So this state of being contented with oneself in this way is quite important. One can hardly be an individual without it.

It's as though here you have almost the beginnings of real individuality. And it also compares or contrasts or is an extension of that previous quality of *anatimani* - being devoid of arrogance. In what *way* does it compare or contrast with it?

Nick: In one's communication, contentedness with others...

S: It's as though the contentment is positive and the absence of arrogance is negative. Why are you arrogant? You're not really content with yourself as you are. You pretend to be something other than you are. It's lack of contentment that leads to this kind of arrogance. But when you're arrogant, you try as it were to create a false self because you're not happy with your real self, the self that you actually do have. *[Long pause]*

Contentment also implies, one might say, a sort of positive appreciation of oneself, and one also might say therefore that it is connected with the practice of metta because when we do the metta bhavana systematically we start off with feeling metta towards ourselves, don't we? So how can you develop metta towards yourself if you are as it were on bad terms with yourself, discontented with yourself? So one often speaks as though one were contented or discontented with regard to external things or situations or other people, but basically, I think, your discontent or content is always with yourself.

Mike Scherk: So then a person who is truly contented can be content in *any* situation. [40]

S: Can be content in any situation within reason. *[Laughter]*. I mean one is still just dealing with the healthy human being who is just beginning to develop individuality. There he won't be contented in absolutely any situation. Only the Buddha or Arhant or Bodhisattva would be, but in any *reasonable* situation, yes, he can be contented.

Padmavajra: He can be contented with himself but he still might find faults with the situation.

S: Oh, yes. Objectively. But they will be faults which he saw objectively, not just on account of his own feeling of discontentment. He might see that such and such situation was not in fact as positive for himself or for others as it might be, or that it was the product of other people's unskilful activities, and he therefore might feel compelled to draw attention to that fact or even to try to change the situation; but not because he himself felt *discontented* in the sort of way that we're talking about now. It's not a very easy thing to do, though, to set about trying to change certain conditions or circumstances while yourself remaining personally content with them, in a healthy way.

Padmavajra: Would that be kind of like the Bodhisattva's attitude? Presumably he's very content with himself...

S: More than contented.

Padmavajra: ...yes, but he's not sort of satisfied?

S: Well, he sees certain situations might be very much better than they are for a lot of people. He himself might be quite content under those conditions but he sees they're not helpful to other people, so therefore he tries to change them. So contentment, being contented, is a quite important - almost a sort of crucial - quality. It means that you're quite concerned in a way to ensure that you have those external conditions or those external supports that you so objectively need for your own *development*, but you do not expect from external things those qualities that you should be providing yourself, and which you should find within yourself. [41]

It does not necessarily mean putting up with any situation. You see what I mean? Because the situation in which you find yourself might be such that it is not suitable for a human being. It

doesn't provide you with the opportunities or the facilities that you really need for your personal growth and development and you *shouldn't* be contented with that sort of situation. That would be a false or a pseudo-content. You should, as it were, insist that the environment provides you with those facilities that you really do need for your personal development. It's not a very easy middle path to follow, is it?

Priyananda: I was thinking in particular it's very often quite difficult to bring about those conditions, to have the right conditions. One has to put up with a little bit of, well, not hardship but difficulty for a certain period of time perhaps, then one knows that perhaps in the near future those conditions will give rise - Well, perhaps sometimes it's necessary to put up with them for a *short* time.

S: Yes, sometimes it might be more trouble to bring about the change.

All right then, one should be contented, 'and easily supportable', *subbharo*. Easy to maintain, easy to support, easy to nourish. Here we see perhaps a bit of a transition; a transition from what *to* what do you think?

Mark: Possibly talking about monks,

S: Possibly talking about monks now. So why should that be? Why should this quality of being easily supportable suggest monks?

Mahamati: I suppose in a way it needn't do because it's good to have just a simple life.

S: Yes, but why does it in fact? It's because monks in the Buddha's day, the bhikkhus, were supported by the lay people. So this is something which is stressed very much in the Pali texts that those who have gone forth, the bhikkhus, are dependent upon the lay people for alms - the lay people provide them with their food, even with their clothing, even with some shelter so that they can devote themselves [42] to meditation and so on. So it's their responsibility, it's their duty even, to be *easy to support*, not give trouble to the lay people who are kind enough, or considerate enough, to provide them with their food and clothing and so on. So here we seem to see a transition from the generally human, as it were, to the healthy and human, the beginnings of individuality to a more specifically 'religious' life. And in this case where one, as it were, is dependent on the laity for one's food and clothing. This being a reflection of the sort of socio-religious situation in India at the time of the Buddha. So what is the general principle involved here, would one say? Of being easily supportable? One might say is it *right* to have people like monks or bhikkhus in the old sense that were supported by a laity?

Mahamati: If that's the only way that laity can express their involvement in Buddhism, then that's all right. As long as it's not holding them back.

S: We did go into this quite a bit on the last study retreat, a recent ten-day one, that one should be very careful - and this is what happens in the Buddhist countries - that your participation in Buddhism, your living of the Buddhist life, is confined just to making offerings to the monks. And this doesn't seem to be really enough, although very often in countries like Burma and Ceylon and Thailand it is considered by some people to *be* enough - and most lay people think it's quite enough. They're being quite good Buddhists if they don't actually break too many of the precepts and give food and clothing to the monks. But this - although there's some truth in this - suggests almost that you live your spiritual life vicariously, which really you cannot do. So I think you have to be quite careful that a split doesn't develop in your spiritual community with full-time professionals as it were on the one side, with other people whose only involvement in

the religious or spiritual life is supporting the full-time professionals.

Nick: They could be supporting the full-time professionals, but I mean it shouldn't *just* be that.

S: Yes, indeed. Yes. Also of course it's connected with this whole idea of work, I think. I think in India broadly speaking, from the very beginning there's been a wrong attitude towards work, especially physical, especially manual work, and you find this reflected even in Indian Buddhism, and it was only in China, especially with Ch'an or Zen, that Eastern Buddhism got away from this. I mean the Indian [43] attitude was - and still is - that manual work, physical work, is something degrading and disgusting and no respectable person should do it if he can possibly help it. So the idea of someone who is leading a religious life *working* is quite foreign to the Indian mind. I don't know if you realise this.

Mike: There was a law case in India. Someone was fired in a government office because he refused to carry a paper over to the next desk, and he won his law case for reinstatement on the grounds that it was not his duty to carry papers. That was a grade lower than his.

S: You get something like this in Britain in the trade union movement. There's this question of - what do they call it, what's the technical term?

Mike: Demarcation.

S: Demarcation. Yes, it's terrible. But in a way it's worse than that even, in India, because at least the demarcation disputes are about different kinds of *work*, but in India I myself have seen many an example where supposing somebody gets a little bit of education which means perhaps a smattering of English and a few other things like that, and he becomes a *babu*, he becomes a gentleman, and he becomes a clerk in an office. Once he has become a clerk in an office, no power on earth will make him carry a burden - that is the duty of a coolie. He will not after that carry his own suitcase to the railway station. He would hire a coolie to do it. He has to maintain his status as a gentleman, as a *babu*. He must not soil his hands with physical work. So physical work is looked down upon. The coolies of course are thoroughly despised; the peasant, the agricultural labourer, they are generally speaking looked down upon even though sometimes nowadays you find comparatively high-caste people doing this work, but only certain kinds of work of that type. And craftsmen are looked down upon. They are relatively low caste. Goldsmiths for instance, silversmiths, these are all low caste people. Shoemakers are low caste people. Anybody who works with his hands is a low caste person. The higher caste people, the Brahmins, do no work with their hands traditionally, neither do the Kshatriyas, the Warriors. The Vaisyas, the higher grade Vaisyas, they can certainly indulge in various financial transactions. The lower ones are the higher ranking tradesmen and handicraft men. But the general Indian attitude right down to the present day is manual work is degrading. They will avoid [44] it at all costs.

So there's some connection here with these religious ideals. The religious person is not supposed to work. He's only supposed to meditate, or to teach or to study, which is all right, but there are some people who, as it were, need work, even after committing themselves spiritually. It's spiritually, as it were, helpful to them. They can't meditate all day. They can't study all day, some of them, so what are they going to do? They might just as well work part of the day and at least help to support themselves. But this is not at all accepted by Indian tradition. And even in the case of Buddhism, except towards the very end - and of course even more so when Buddhism went to China where they had a rather different attitude towards work.

Nick: Didn't the Mahayana try and change the attitude, the ideal of the Bodhisattva like

Vimalakirti?

S: Yes, but it's largely theoretical. And what was Vimalakirti? What *was* he?

Nick: He was referred to as a householder, wasn't he?

S: Yes, but what was his trade or business?

Nick: I don't know.

S: Well, he seemed to be presented as a wealthy banker. A sort of high-grade Vaisya, something like that. It was only with the Vajrayana that you got some of the siddhas who were spiritually highly developed *and* of low caste *and* engaging in various, as we would say, menial occupations and so on.

Padmavajra: Do you think, as a general rule for the majority of people, it's possible to work and keep up full-time practice and even be enlightened?

S: We're talking about any work *at all*. I mean the Indian idea is that if you're into anything religious, or anything cultural, you should not do any kind of *manual* work. It's completely excluded as it were. Even as a sort of hobby. So therefore if you were a religious person, you take up a spiritual life, you automatically become almost like a clergyman in this country and people would not think it quite right, say, to see a clergyman working in a factory or see a clergyman working, say, as a tailor or a clergyman behind a [45] counter in a shop. They would think it somewhat incompatible with his cloth. But this is because the spiritual person has become identified more with these sort of, what shall I say? - the clerisy in Coleridge's sense. Do you see this connection? The spiritual person is regarded as belonging to the professional classes, if you see what I mean. It's a *bit* like that in India - so when you become a monk or you become a sannyasin or you become a bhikkhu it's as though if you didn't belong to them before, you're adopted into the professional classes, and you do not do the sort of work that professional people do not do.

Padmavajra: I feel that it's saying that - well, the attitude is that like you can't put your spiritual life into practice in kind of ordinary affairs. You can only do it - unless you're going to do it full-time. Is that what's...

S: No, it isn't really like that, no. What I'm trying to get at is that because the Indians had such a low opinion of manual work, the possibility of someone who took up the spiritual life doing any manual work couldn't possibly arise. So *therefore* after he took up the spiritual life he had to be supported by others, because he couldn't support himself, because a person of that sort was just not supposed to engage in any such activity. So this almost compelled the religious person to be dependent for alms on the lay society, the lay community. The possibility of, as we would say, a number of people wanting to lead a spiritual life, getting together, yes, giving up the family life, giving up worldly occupation in the ordinary sense, and supporting themselves by some joint activity, that just never *occurred* to the ancient Indians. They never thought of this. The Chinese did. The Tibetans did. Not the Indians.

Mahamati: I've heard it explained that it's very useful looking from the point of vinaya to be completely dependent on other people, that sort of simplifies it - maybe for some people that doesn't ring true.

S: But the thing is, does it really work? It does simplify things but does it simplify from a

spiritual point of view?

Mahamati: I heard that as a suggestion; I don't know whether...

Nick: Well, it might not simplify things.

S: It might not. [46]

Nick: I've heard some strange stories, you just put your feet up and just be waited on hand and foot just because you're wearing a yellow robe.

S: But apart from that there is the question of temperament. Some people by temperament, though spiritually committed and spiritually evolving, are not particularly into study and lecturing and teaching, so what form is their commitment to take?

Mahamati: In other words it limits.

S: It limits, yes. So therefore the spiritual life tends to be identified with the cultured life, the literary-cum-artistic life almost. And as has happened in England, say in the case of the Church of England clergymen, the spiritual leader becomes a sort of member of, as I've said, what Coleridge called the clerisy, that is the cultured people, or yes, the professional literary classes. You see this all the way through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The clergy are not the spiritually committed, the real Christians as it were - they are the people who have been to university. A Church of England clergyman had to have a university degree - I think most of them still have to have - though they are taking a few business people after retirement into the priesthood, into the clergy. But they probably think twice about taking, say, a shop-keeper. Generally they're taking them from the business world. They'd think twice perhaps about taking a bus conductor. [*Laughter*]

Mike: I think four years ago they had the first worker priest ordained.

S: The first you see. The first worker priest. You mean in the Church of England?

Mike: That was since I came to England in '72. The very first one.

S: That's quite significant, isn't it?

Mike: Somewhere around Bethnal Green. [*Pause*] Isn't there another dangerous attitude towards work that one can have in the West, and that is the idea of work as being something that we basically don't want to do? The contrast between work and the other time. The other attitude was strong in the Eskimos and Indians in North America who were really taught the whole concept of work by the [47] white man because they never thought of hunting or farming or gardening as work at all. It was all part of life. And it's only since the white man came that they split it up.

S: I was reading recently a life of D.H. Lawrence and apparently someone asked his wife, Frieda Lawrence, who was not a writer or artist or anything like that, how she could possibly endure spending so much time cooking and washing up. So she said, 'Well, what else is there to do?' Apparently she thoroughly enjoyed doing it. So that is the idea, you should regard it as work and resent it. But I think most human beings need work, certainly normal, healthy human beings, *need work* in the sense of some physical activity, which they find pleasurable and which is productive or useful, at least - even creative. I know from my personal contact and observation, I will say that the bhikkhus in South-east Asia who are completely dependent usually on the lay

people and looked after by them really well, aren't in the best sort of psychological condition, not to speak of spiritual condition, and some of the more healthy bhikkhus would *like* to be able to do more, but the lay people won't let them. Many of them are quite *willing* to do but the tradition is so firmly established the lay people felt embarrassed, even upset, if the bhikkhus tried to do certain things. And it all goes back to the idea about work. I don't think it's so much a question of *worldly* activity that someone committed to the spiritual life shouldn't get into. I think it is much more a question of work which is considered not just unspiritual but socially degrading.

Padmavajra: It's also really dangerous if you just have the spiritually committed giving up work and depending on the laity. It sounds as though there is a real danger of - you're really vulnerable in their power.

S: There is that practical consideration, yes. Actually the laity virtually control the monks, the spiritual community. This is why for instance in Theravada countries the monk cannot put a foot wrong. He's not allowed to. There's the threat of immediate withdrawal of economic support. He can't really go against the wishes of the laity. So a dangerous situation does present itself. I think we have to consider this whole question of support very carefully indeed and not necessarily accept the traditions that have come down, especially where these [48] have been influenced, as they seem to have been in *this* case, purely by Indian social and cultural conditions.

Mahamati: Virtually when the vinaya was...

S: Yes, it seems as though Buddhism itself accepted these conventions.

Mahamati: Even the Buddha accepted these conventions?

S: It would seem so, at least as a framework within which to operate,

Kularatna: Why do you think it was at the time of the Buddha, then, that all these monks were able to devote themselves to study and meditation full-time?

S: I don't think this lasted for very long actually, this state of affairs. Quite quickly it seems the monks got into what we would regard as literary activity and teaching. You mustn't forget also that right at the very beginning Buddhism was orally transmitted, so a lot of time was spent in learning things by heart from other monks and chanting together to refresh your memory, to keep everything in mind. There was a lot of *this* sort of activity going on. And then the scriptures were written down, or what we call now the scriptures were written down, and a great deal of literary activity developed. And then later on, when monasteries came to be built and images came to be made, the monks took quite a part in this, especially in the Mahayana and still more in the Vajrayana context. So in that way they did become involved in *some* practical things, and as I say in the case of the Mahayana, the *spirit* was there in the Bodhisattva ideal, and this sort of fructified more when Buddhism, especially Mahayana Buddhism, went to China and Tibet where people were more practically inclined and didn't have that sort of prejudice against work. So in, for instance, a Tibetan Buddhist monastery you find monks doing *all* the different kinds of work in a way that they wouldn't, say, in Ceylon or Thailand. You find the monks doing the cooking, monks doing the drawing of water and the chopping of wood, monks doing the building, monks doing the metal casting, monks printing books - everything done by the monks according to their different abilities. [49] So it is not a bad thing in some ways that those who want to get on with as it were spiritual activities should be supported by other people - let's not say lay people, but other people, but we are to be very careful that that doesn't lead us to considering practical work, especially manual work, as something degrading that a spiritual person can't be concerned with. The practical is not necessarily the worldly. This seems to be the Indian impression; what is

practical is worldly, especially what is manual is worldly, it's not religious, it's not spiritual. So if you take up a religious life, if you take up a spiritual life, then you must be away from any practical activities because they are rather more worldly than other activities. The ancient Indians seem to have had the same attitude to work as the ancient Greeks had. I mean the ancient Greek idea was that work was something to be done by the slaves. So in the same way the higher caste Hindus, or the higher caste Indians, always felt that work was something done by the lower castes, the lower orders. One can understand this in a way at the beginning, because at the beginning work was so heavy and one had to do so much of it that if one wanted time, if one wanted leisure, for thinking and higher pursuits, one had to be free from work. At least not to have to spend one's whole time at it. So it's understandable to some extent that there developed this sort of conflict between higher cultural pursuits and manual labour. But a dangerous situation develops if you allow the two things to drift too far apart. So you have your intelligentsia that never soil their hands with work and your workers who have no sort of cultural life. But certainly that state of affairs is not necessary any longer. In fact one might say inasmuch as you are a body and senses as well as a mind, you need physical activity to remain psychologically healthy; and coming back to some of the monks I've known, some of them are in a quite unhealthy physical state just because of no physical activity, no physical work, not enough exercise. If you're just exercising your mind all the time, your brain, you just become a bit one-sided or even quite one-sided. *[Pause]*

So these are some of the implications of support. So 'One should be easily supportable'. What's the general principle here? That's quite important to understand.

Priyananda: That you can easily support yourself. Not so much that others can easily support you but you can support yourself easily. Of course you have human needs. [50]

S: I wasn't thinking quite in that way. I was thinking, after all, there are some things you can't do for yourself, there are some things you can't make for yourself - not unless you're going to spend all your time making them. It's as though you are entitled to depend on others for certain things, in certain ways. For instance, we are dependent on others for our food, aren't we? We don't actually grow the stuff ourselves, do we, usually? We don't actually make our own clothes. We don't actually build our own houses usually. We are dependent on *others* for things, for things of this sort, whether we're monks or whether we're lay people. So you are in a way supported, but supported by what, or by whom? *[Pause]* You're supported by society at large, you're supported by the rest of the human community as it were. So what principle is involved here, connected with this being easily supportable?

Priyananda: Almost a small is beautiful approach.

S: Yes. You shouldn't take more than you really need. And offer to contribute what you can. You shouldn't take at least more than your fair share of whatever is available.

Mike: This seems very close to models of socialist and communal society, this idea.

S: Well, they come quite close to Buddhism, then. (*Unclear*) ... thought of these things long before. But you get the idea. It's not just a question of a monk who is totally dependent upon a laity, being easy to support - that is a very narrow form of this principle, a very narrow way of looking at it. What it means is that the individual lives as a member of society - and you can hardly help living as a member of society - even though you're committed to the spiritual life. He's quite justified in taking or accepting, let us say from society, those things which he needs and is unable to produce for himself, but he is not justified in taking more than he really needs. Nor is he justified in merely taking without rendering any sort of service or making any sort of

contribution in return. He should take what he needs and give what he can - and those are quite familiar words, aren't they? So this is really what is involved here: Be easy to support. Your existence, your life, should not constitute a drain on natural resources or a drain on the society to which you belong. You should be easily supportable. And this involves to [51] some extent, I think, self-support. I think it's not very many people who can afford to be supported entirely by others. I mean afford spiritually. You see what I mean? It does put you in a very, as it were passive, position which might not be good for quite a lot of people.

Kularatna: It's also seems to me to involve quite a lot of responsibility - having been given the opportunity to make good use of it.

S: Yes, if you are in fact meditating and writing and teaching or anything like that all the time, fair enough, but very few people are in fact able to live like that. So you might just as well utilise at least part of your time supporting yourself, especially if you can do it co-operatively with other people with the same sort of ideals, and use that as an opportunity for communicating with those people. *[Pause]*

Mark: Surely this support would go beyond mere economic support?

S: You mean others' support of you?

Mark: Yes.

S: Yes.

Mark: You don't make demands on other people.

S: You don't make emotional demands, for instance, as some people do. I mean you all know that some people can be emotionally very draining because of the demands that they make. You are entitled to rely upon other human beings for the kind of support or help that one human being can be, as it were, reasonably expected to give another human being. You can't do everything yourself. For instance, supposing that you get into difficulties, you're entitled to ask others for help, especially your friends, but you're not entitled to be an unnecessary, neurotic drain on them. You're not allowed as it were to expect from them what you should be providing yourself with, and you should be able to stand on your own two feet, you shouldn't expect *them* to prop you up or hold you up. But if you're knocked over, due to no fault of your own, you've got a right to expect [52] that at least they help you to get up if you've been temporarily immobilised. *[Pause]* But then it goes on to say, or the Buddha goes on to say, not only *santussako ca subharo ca* but *appakicco*. *Appakicco* means 'with few duties', or 'with little work' or 'with not many things to do'. So why do you think *this* comes in? Again this is rather, as it were, monastic in context. It's often said of the bhikkhu that he should not have too many things to do. So what does that mean?

Mark: So that he is devoid of a framework, structure, on which he can rely.

S: Yes, yes.

Mark: Also it gives him much more freedom from anything he has to do.

S: It suggests a sort of difference between work in the sense in which we've been discussing work, and just being busy, being aimlessly busy, just keeping yourself busy, keeping yourself occupied almost at all costs. You know the way in which one can do this, don't you? You don't

like to be without something to do. This can be a bit neurotic.

Mike: Your busyness is very much to fill a hole, an internal hole, and it just cannot be satisfied.

S: Yes, right. *[Pause]* So in the original, as it were, monastic context the idea was that the monk, let's say, shouldn't have too many things to do. He shouldn't be too occupied performing ceremonies for the laity or running errands and messages, and even teaching pupils too much, because then he wouldn't have time for study, for reflection, or just for being quiet and by himself. You can become too busy in this sort of way even with 'religious' or 'spiritual' activities. We all know *that* very well. So one should work, yes; be occupied, yes, But only with those things that are really necessary. Let not your work or your activity or your busyness be an escape from yourself. *[Pause]*

Then *sallahukavutti*. *Sallahukavutti* isn't very easy to render - sometimes it is rendered as 'of light livelihood'. It doesn't actually say *livelihood* though that is implied. I wonder if I can see what *vutti* means [53] separately. What does Woodward say? *[Pause]*

Lokamitra: Of few wants, frugal. So it doesn't really.

S: So it doesn't really face up to it, does it?

It's more 'of light wants' one could say. 'Of light wants', therefore not exactly frugal.

Lokamitra: It says 'few wants' here.

S: A few wants - it's really 'light'. *Lahuka* is light. Not heavy, metaphorically speaking.

Nick: How is livelihood implied in that, then?

S: Well, livelihood, the word livelihood, though in the translation is not in the text. That's sort of interpretation, rather than translation, but I mean what is the monk's livelihood? He gets his livelihood from the lay people. So if he is light in his wants his livelihood will be light. Do you see the connection, the association? But I'm just wondering how we could take that in a more general sort of way. If you're, say, working for yourself, if your wants are light then your means of livelihood could also be light. Do you see the connection? Whether you take from others or whether you provide yourself with what you need, if your wants are light then your living rather than your livelihood, let's say - your *living* is light. This is the kind of ideal which is held up. This seems to suggest just simplicity of life. Living simply. Simple life. So such a person, one who is skilled in his good and who wishes to attain the state of calm, he should be not only the things mentioned in the first verse but also content, easily supportable, with not too many activities or duties, and also lead a simple life; to not have too many needs to be fulfilled.

But there's one point that has really arisen that we haven't gone into but perhaps we should. There's this question of worldly activity, of practical activity as non-spiritual. That when you commit yourself to the spiritual life, and become as it were a full-timer, there are certain things that you don't do. But is work necessarily one of those things that you don't do? I mean, we tend to think, even in the way in which we use the expression in the FWBO, [54] that a full-timer is one who is only, say, meditating and studying Buddhism, taking classes, giving lectures and so on, but is that necessarily so, because if it *is* so, it suggests that the possibility of your commitment being as it were, coterminous with other activities, especially practical activities, is completely excluded. That is to say that if you're knocking a wall down, that's time taken off from your spiritual life, but is that necessarily so? The Indian attitude suggests that it is, so

therefore if you're into the spiritual life, you can't knock a wall down because that would mean, for that period at least, you would not be engaged in the spiritual life, but is that really so?

Mike: Doesn't it really depend on how you knock the wall down?

S: How not only you knock the wall down but what for? I mean you could be knocking it down to get into somebody's house and steal. *[Laughter]* So it's not so much the activity itself, objectively speaking, but why you are doing it and with what sort of mental activity. And surely there are all sorts of worldly activities that you could be involved in and actually doing without any prejudice to your spiritual commitment, because your state of mind would be a positive state of mind; one which was fully in accordance with a spiritual commitment or even helping and supporting that.

Lokamitra: I mean this is so important for us in India because people...

S: I'm afraid you're going to be really up against it there.

Lokamitra: They think that they can't really do any practice, it's a waste of time because they have to work, and this is a bit of a cop-out.

S: Well, it's true in some ways because the question of livelihood does come in. There is a wrong livelihood as well as right livelihood. There are certain kinds of practical work which for various reasons are quite incompatible with the spiritual life and those you cannot do. There are others which might be compatible or incompatible according to the mental states and the purpose for which you did them. For instance there are quite a few of our ex-Untouchable Buddhists in Pune, working in the small arms factory. [55] Now that, in the ordinary way, would be regarded as wrong livelihood by Buddhism, so you might do the work quite cheerfully, etc., etc., but it still wouldn't make it, you know, right livelihood. You have to give up those things, so there are certainly some kinds of, as it were, worldly activity that you would have to give up because they were not in keeping with any kind of spiritual commitment, though that certainly doesn't apply to all. But the Indian tradition seems to be to reject work of any kind, lock, stock and barrel, except perhaps a little teaching. Maybe teaching Sanskrit or teaching Pali is in keeping with a so-called spiritual life or so-called religious life, but not, say, working in a practical way with your hands. [56] But it's really important that in India people start getting this right, otherwise you will have your as it were full-time monks supported by your very, very part-time lay Buddhists.

Mark: Didn't this lead to some sort of hypocrisy in Tibet, that the butchers...?

S: Right, yes, the butchers had to be Muslims, which is not a very Mahayanistic attitude.

Mark: So everybody ate the meat, but...

S: But no one actually killed it.

Mike: It's very much like in the West in many ways. Most people wouldn't be willing to kill animals.

S: Yes. So it seems to me that in India, there needs to be a total re-evaluation of work. The only person who has really done or said anything about this is Mahatma Gandhi, who did try to change attitudes, not very successfully.

Kularatna: He didn't get the Brahmins sweeping.

S: He did not get *the* Brahmins, as such, of 20 million strong, doing anything. He got 2 or 3 Brahmins actually doing certain things. Yes? But it didn't make any real difference spiritually - it needs to be done by the whole society, the whole society needs to change its attitude. But he did try very hard. He did get *some* caste Hindus changing their ways individually certainly.

Padmavajra: How do you see us going about changing attitudes?

S: Well, you have to go very slowly and carefully, I think especially for people in yellow robes. *[cough obscures part of next speaker's words]*

Padmavajra: [Just talking] about work [is not] going to be enough, just sort of exhortations of now you can practise the spiritual life and not work as well. It's going to have to be some kind of example.

S: There must be some kind of example, yes. I mean, so long as one is actually fully occupied, maybe writing, teaching, and so on, that [57] is all right. But in addition one really needs, I think, to be doing certain practical things. I mean, not everybody, especially not at the beginning, where teaching and lecturing is the most necessary thing to begin with, but certainly once there are a few hundred members of the Order out there, some at least, I mean Indian, as well as English and American and so on - but when there's a few hundred, at least we can have some people who are seen to be engaged in, so to speak, practical things, and who are as spiritually committed as anybody else. We really have to re-educate the Indians, including the Indian Buddhists.

Kularatna: One way of getting over that will probably be to set up Right Livelihood situations.

S: Yes.

Kularatna: I mean anybody who goes to Sukhavati has seen that working *in (unclear) ... spiritual* life can *(unclear) ...* seen that sort of situation operating.

S: But on the other hand we need to be clear about certain kinds of work being quite incompatible. We have to be really clear about that. Also the *amount* of work, the proportion of your time that you spend in physical activities. Clearly there is the great variation in people's temperaments, their particular needs, and the motive, and what you're actually doing, what you're actually producing. *[Pause]*

All right, let's pass on, then. 'With senses controlled', *santindriyo*. *Santindriyo?* - It's not so much controlled, that is not really the meaning of the literal translation. Chalmers says discipline, but it's not that either. It really means with *pacified* senses. So what do you think it means, to pacify the senses? The peaceful senses almost. *[Pause]* All right, supposing you do translate this 'with senses controlled', what does that suggest?

Nick: Tightness.

S: No, going a bit more step by step than that.

Mark: Willed? [58]

S: No, I'm thinking of something a little more obvious.

Nick: Mindfulness

S: No. So if it says the senses should be controlled, what does it suggest? That now they're *not* controlled. So if you say that the senses are to be pacified what does *that* suggest - that the senses are not as it were peaceful? So what does one mean by the senses not being peaceful? How are they not peaceful?

Kovida: They're being stimulated.

S: Being stimulated. But the senses are being stimulated all the time, you can't help it. So long as your eyes are open you're being stimulated by all sorts of visual stimuli.

Padmavajra: You're being disturbed by that, by those senses coming in, you're being disturbed, it's making you turbulent.

S: But what is making it?

Kularatna: Your own reaction to...

S: Your own reaction to the sensations. Yes. In a way, to speak of the senses being controlled is a bit of a red herring, unless you remember that for the Buddhists, generally, senses included the mind. There were six senses, not just five. But usually we speak of the senses as though the senses were all to blame - that the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and so on - but in Vajrayana Buddhism especially, it's made clear, the senses are not to blame at all. The senses are quite pure - it's the mind. It's the mind *appropriating* what is experienced through the senses. There's nothing wrong with sense experience, there's nothing wrong with seeing forms and colours, nothing wrong with hearing sounds. For instance, you remember that little episode that I frequently mention, about the monk who followed after the Buddha requesting a teaching and the Buddha turned round and said: 'In the seen, only the seen. In the heard, only the heard...' and so on. There's nothing wrong with seeing, there's nothing wrong with hearing, there's nothing wrong with the senses, nothing wrong with the sense of seeing, sense of hearing, they're perfectly all right. But what is it that does the mischief? It's the mind. It's the mind appropriating as it were what is seen, what is heard, reacting to it, reacting against it. [59] So it's the mind that disturbs the senses. The senses are just like windows through which light comes. That's all. So what do you think therefore is meant by having your senses calmed? Your senses pacified or peaceful?

Priyananda: It is implying a sort of internal thing, that one is actually doing something with one's mind, doing something with one's frame of mind and through the senses - are quieter or not even that, that one is no longer disturbed through the senses -

Lokamitra: Not being so reactive.

S: Yes, right. To put it in a rather extreme form, one of our Friends a few years ago made the point that when you became really mindful and a bit spiritually developed, all food tasted the same to you. [*Laughter*]. Do you get the point? Do you see what he's getting at? So I was asked about this. He was propagating his point of view very vigorously, that when you became a little developed all food tasted the same. He claimed in fact, I believe, that all food tasted the same to him, whether it was potatoes or cabbage, egg, [*Laughter*], it just tasted the same because he had risen, as it were, to that mental state. So I said that I didn't agree with this at all, that this was not the Buddhist teaching. In fact, if anything the Buddhist teaching was the opposite, that the more aware you became, the more sensitive you were to differences of taste, differences of colour, differences of sound and so on. You became more acutely aware. but what about your *mental* state?

Lokamitra: It's not perturbed by the senses.

S: It's not perturbed, it's not perturbed, yes? That's the difference. But not that as you become more mindful your senses are blunted in any way - no. Not that at all. So here, if one does speak in terms of controlling the senses, it doesn't mean restraining the eye from visual objects, or the ear from auditory objects. It's a question of one's mental attitude. On the other hand it doesn't mean it doesn't matter what you do with the senses provided you keep your mind all right - no - that's sort of going to the other extreme, because there are certain sense experiences which will almost inevitably affect your mind in a certain way. But it is the *mind* that is to be controlled, or the mind that is to be pacified or made more aware. The senses are innocent as senses. They're corrupted by the mind. It's not the senses that corrupt the mind as very often we think. It is the mind that corrupts the senses. I hope no one's [60] going to misunderstand me here.

Kularatna: I'm sure somebody will.

S: But what we think of as pertaining to the senses doesn't really pertain to the senses at all, that is not to the five *physical* senses, it pertains to the mind.

Mark: Is the role of the mind in this to discriminate between senses and thought?

S: In a way it is.

Mark: To show preference to... (*unclear*).

S: The only question is the *basis* for the preference. For instance, clearly you need to prefer, say, food which is wholesome and nutritive to food which is otherwise, but not that one should have a sort of neurotic attachment to one kind of food rather than to another, or strong likes and dislikes in this sort of way. So therefore if you get, say, some really nice fruit, you can thoroughly enjoy it. But if you don't get it, you don't bother. But you don't relish it any the less just because you're more mindful or more spiritual, *as a sense experience*. But the sense experience does not become a basis for craving in your mind. This may not be a very easy state to obtain, but the point to be understood is that if there is any fault, it is the *mind* which is at fault, not the senses as such.

Padmavajra: There is the practice, though, of guarding the doors of the senses. I mean, presumably you don't put yourself in certain situations.

S: You don't put yourself in those situations where the sense impressions will be of such a nature as inevitably to give rise to certain unskillful mental states in your mind.

Mike: So presumably you don't go to a strip-club or something like that?

S: Not if you're trying to lead a celibate life! [*Laughter*] But some people might. Some people might be able to go even to a strip club, just [61] in the same way that they go the National Gallery and look at the beautiful pictures on the wall - just seeing beautiful forms, if they do happen to be beautiful, they aren't always, just in motion as it were. I mean, presumably a Buddha, or Bodhisattva or Arahant could look at them like that. [*Pause*] Or if you are really greedy as regards food, don't go prowling around supermarkets or anything like that. But even so, it's still not the senses that are at fault, it is the *mind* that is at fault. It's the *mind* that makes that particular kind of connection, that particular kind of association, not the senses themselves.

Mike: It's very, very subjective.

S: It's a very subjective thing, yes. And some persons might give rise to unskilful mental states in a situation where other persons would give rise only to quite skilful mental states. One has to see for oneself what one's own reactions are. But for instance, if you look at a flower you might have a very intense perception of the colour, of the scent and so on, and thoroughly appreciate the flower, but without giving rise to any unskilful mental state at all. That would be comparatively easy, one might say. So ideally one should be able to regard any sort of sense object in that way. Appreciate it positively but not give rise to any craving, certainly not any neurotic greed. So we have to be very careful how we take these phrases, for instance, 'senses controlled', 'with senses controlled'; you rather tend to think of horses - this comparison is sometimes actually used - horses getting a bit out of control. You pull on the reins and pull them back and prevent them galloping away. You think in those sort of terms, don't you? You think of senses as sort of wild horses, but they're not, they're just windows, they're just mirrors. The wild horse is within, that's the mind.

Padmavajra: If you *do* take this kind of thing too literally... 'with senses controlled', it could lead you into psychological trouble, like you could just stop experiencing.

S: Yes, yes.

Padmavajra: Because you think, you know...

S: You could start thinking the less experience, the more controlled, because there would *be* less to control, but it doesn't follow like that at all. [62]

All right *nipako ca* is translated as discreet, by Sadhatissa. Chalmers translates it as quick-witted. I think discreet is a bit nearer, though even that isn't really satisfactory. It means something more like not pushing, not presumptuous, but let me see what the dictionary says. [Pause].

'Intelligent, clever, prudent, wise'. It's more like prudent. Intelligent. It means sort of sensible in practical matters. Prudence, I think, is usually defined technically as the ability to adapt means to ends. It's sort of practical intelligence, knowing what is suitable and what is unsuitable, therefore discreet.

Mark: It sounds to me as forestalling trouble, doesn't it?

S: It could be forestalling trouble, yes, because you know what's going to happen, what is going to follow from certain things that are done. [Pause]

Then *appagabbho* is translated here as not impudent, not overbold, modest, not pushing oneself forward. [Long pause] And what does Woodward say for *kulesu ananugiddho*, not easily attached to family?

Lokamitra: (No craving after gifts?)

S: *Kulesu* is 'among the families'. It suggests that the connotation, or the conflict, still here, is that of the monk dependent upon the laity. So he might become attached to particular families, rather than be independent, or expect too much from them. This is the sort of situation that is envisaged. This can happen quite easily, that certain families will *adopt* some monk, or a monk almost adopts them, frequents them too much, asks for too much from them or expects too much from them. [Gong] There's probably quite a bit that could be said about that, but as you hear,

time is up. We haven't got very far today, have we? *[Laughter]* There'll be more time for study tomorrow

Nick: Can I stay here next week?

S: *[Laughs]*

S: So these are all the qualities of someone who is skilled in his good [63] and wishes to attain to Nirvana in a word: that he should be capable, straight, perfectly straight; should be supple, well-spoken, amenable, without conceit, contented, easy to support, with not too many works or duties, of few wants and needs, and with pacified senses, discreet, prudent, modest, and not neurotically attached to particular groups of people. One could sort of paraphrase this by speaking not just of families, but of *groups*. The individual cannot be excessively attached to any particular group, whether his own family in the literal sense, or his own race, or his own past, or even own nationality - one could look at it very easily like that. All right, we'll have to stop there. Do you think you will be having yoga outside?

Lokamitra: It's not raining now. It did rain before. I'd quite like to do some things on the floor with people.

S: On the floor, where?

Lokamitra: Well, relaxing, so if the grass is wet, it's not particularly good.

S: Well, you'd better see, because in that case if you want to use the lounge we have to make some other arrangements. But anyway there is a cup of tea first, isn't there, for the non-yogis?

[64]

Day 2

S: All right. On to verse 3, then. Verse 3 says, 'He should not commit any slight wrong on account of which other wise men might censure him.'

Padmavajra: Other wise men.

S: Other wise men might censure him. There's a possible ambiguity here. It's other, wise men, not other wise men, because if you're committing a slight wrong, more clearly you aren't very wise, not at that particular moment anyway. *[Pause]* This particular verse, or rather this part of this verse, seems to be referring to something that was mentioned in more than one of the talks that we had last night. What do you think that is? I mean who *are* these wise men, at least in this particular connection?

Lokamitra: The Kalyana mitras, the senior...

S: The Kalyana mitras, yes. So he should not commit any *slight* wrong even. It's *khuddam*. Even a slight, a small wrong, on account of which other, wise men might censure him, or criticise him. This gives a sort of rule of thumb for ensuring that one is on the right path, that one's actions are skilful, that those who are wise, those who are knowledgeable, truly understanding, will not censure you. Sometimes it's very difficult, again as was mentioned last night, to reduce morality to a matter of observing certain rules, doing certain things or not doing certain other things, and one of the reasons - maybe the main reason - why it is so difficult to reduce morality to a matter

of observing rules is that first of all human nature itself is so complex, and sometimes *situations* are so complicated. What might be right in one set of circumstances might not be right in another set of circumstances. What might be right for one particular person might not be right for another person. This is not to suggest a complete ethical relativism, but only to suggest that situations, circumstances, personalities, are so complicated, so complex, that it's very difficult to judge exactly how even agreed moral principles will work out in practice, or whether what is working out *is* moral, *is* ethical, or otherwise. So it's as though you can't rely upon rules, you can't rely on the rigid application of rules. They seem to cover, satisfactorily, only very simple and uncomplicated and obvious [65] cases. So if you cannot rely upon the rules, or on say a rigid application of the rules, you cannot rely on yourself also very often - what is it that you are to rely on? What is it that you *can* rely upon? What is left for you to rely upon?

Lokamitra: The example and advice of your kalyana mitras.

S: Yes, it's the spiritual community really. It's the sort of informed judgement of the spiritual community that you can rely upon, or that is your best guide, in such a situation. So why do you think that is? What makes the spiritual community the best sort of guide, or the wise as it says here - literally, the knowers, those who know? What is it that makes them the best guides in these situations or for such a purpose?

Nick: They're disinterested.

S: They're disinterested. I mean they themselves have experienced, as individuals leading the spiritual life, they know *you*, which means they can take into account the personal factor, and also, one might say, on account of themselves being individuals, trying to develop as individuals or even actually *being* individuals, they have a sort of sense which transcends the sort of - what shall we say? - rational, reflective application of rules. They have a sort of sense of what is right, what is skilful, which is the product of their own long experience. So that when they see you doing something, even without maybe knowing all the circumstances, they can pick up whether that's a skilful thing that you're doing or not, and advise you accordingly. It's a sort of capacity for judgement that you get as a result of long experience, both with yourself and also with the world. It's like, for instance, an artist, someone who is a real artist, who knows what art is really like, he can just glance at a picture - he knows at once whether it's a good picture or a bad. Or someone who is a really good literary critic, he knows what literature is. He starts reading, say, a short story or an essay, after a few paragraphs he knows whether it's going to be any good or not. He doesn't need to read the whole thing. As it says, you don't need to eat the whole of an egg to know that it's bad. So it's the same way with the spiritual friends, with these wise; when they see you doing something, or hear of you doing something, they may not need in a sense to know all the details, [66] circumstantially, but they have a sort of sense that what you're doing is not right, or what you're doing is right, is skilful. And you respect that sense of theirs, you respect their judgement. But of course it is to be emphasised that this sort of judgement or censure when your behaviour is unskilful, or criticism of the wise, is a very different thing from the demand on the part of the group, or the elders of the group, or the more powerful people in the group, that you should conform to the standards, the values and the norms of the group. Again this point was made clear, wasn't it, last night?

Kularatna: How do you think you can tell one from the other?

S: Well, you can usually tell if someone really does sincerely desire what is good for you, not in a sort of blind way, because how can they sincerely desire what is good for you unless they really *know* what is good for you? So it means that you must have built up your faith and confidence in them over quite a period and know from experience that very often they may know better than

you and that their judgement, their guidance, is more reliable at least in some situations, in some circumstances, than is your own. A certain amount of faith in the Buddhist sense is requisite here because the fact that they are wise, are wiser than you, means you cannot fully understand them, you cannot see things quite as they see them, but you have a sort of trust based on your previous experience of them, that they do see things more clearly and more completely than you do yourself. So therefore you accept their judgement in certain matters, even though it may not correspond with your own, because you have that faith and that trust in them, in their judgement and in their good will towards you, in their wish that you may develop, that you may prosper. You take their advice like you might take a doctor's advice, or like you might take your bank manager's advice, or your solicitor's advice, in those spheres where their judgement is more competent than your own, and you have confidence in their professional reliability. This is only an analogy, of course. The advice or the criticism of the spiritual friends, of the wise, is offered in a quite different sort of context. Well, there *is* an analogy.

Kularatna: But then it's got to be somebody you have confidence in. It can't be somebody telling you...

S: Yes, it must be someone that you have confidence in, or who you know has the confidence maybe of a lot of people in *whom* you have confidence. It isn't necessary always that you have your own personal confidence directly in that person.

Mike: Maybe that word 'wise' is important there, that you see the person as wise (*unclear*). You've built up this confidence in the person. [67]

S: As I've said, the word isn't literally 'wise', it's *vinnu* which means just those who know. It's connected with *vijnana*, it's connected with *vidya*, just those who know, pure and simple as it were, as opposed to those who don't know - who *see*, who are clear in their minds, who really do understand, who really do have some vision. This is what it suggests, and you know that they have that from your past experience. You have found their judgement more reliable than your own when you have taken their advice and followed it, but this can come only from experience; and quite clearly you've got to trust someone quite a lot, and that implies knowing them quite well, to accept their judgement when it concerns certain quite important matters - matters which are quite important for you - and where either you don't have any idea at all what to do, or where perhaps you've got quite strong ideas or quite strong wishes or desires, that they don't agree with the judgement of your spiritual friends, of the wise - then you need quite a bit of faith or trust to accept their judgement rather than your own. You're convinced that they really do *know* better than you do yourself and you're not just knuckling under, it's just a manifestation of your faith and trust. In extreme cases it's very easy to see the difference between conformity to group values and group demands, and reliance upon the advice of the spiritual community, but there may be sort of marginal cases or intermediate cases where you may not really be quite sure which you are doing, and then it does become rather difficult, because that depends upon you and how you regard those people, whether you really do regard them as a spiritual community or as a group - whether you really do feel a member of a group *or* an individual among other individuals or a less developed individual among other more developed individuals. So this is a very important touchstone, what the spiritual friends think, what the wise, those who do really know, think, with regard to your conduct, your behaviour; if you feel that they are beginning to disapprove, they're not quite happy with what you are doing, they're not quite happy with the way that you are, the chances are that you're straying from the right path, and so should be quite careful. It may not even be necessary for them to *say* anything. You become conscious of a sort of disharmony between yourself and them, between what *you* are doing and what *they* are doing. Things don't seem quite right. You're not really quite in touch, and you start wondering why. They may not have expressed any opinion at all, but [68] suddenly you discover that there's - not

exactly a gulf between you, but certainly - a sort of hiatus. You're not as fully in communication with them as you were before. You're not quite on the same wavelength with them as you were before. It's not *they* who have changed, it's you. So then you start asking yourself, well, how? In what way? How can I put it right? How can I get back in touch? And it may even be, sometimes we notice this, that even though the spiritual friends don't say anything, even though the wise don't say anything, even perhaps haven't noticed that you've gone astray, if you've only just started to go astray, you start getting the uncomfortable feeling none the less, that they're displeased with you, that they're even angry with you, but they may be quite oblivious of all this. They might not have noticed as yet, the change that has taken place. So what do you think *that* is, when you start feeling the spiritual friends are displeased with you and angry with you in that sort of way, in those sort of conditions? Well, it's your own what we call guilty conscience. You know quite well in this sort of situation that you have gone a bit astray, you have slipped back a bit, you're in a way reproaching yourself, but you think or imagine that *they* are reproaching you, and you might even start feeling angry with them, even resentful. All the time they know nothing of this [*Laughter*]. Perhaps then they start noticing that you seem a bit uneasy and a bit uncomfortable, a bit sullen, a bit resentful, and then they start wondering what's wrong. Maybe they ask you, 'What's going on?' And then you might say, 'Oh, I think you're angry with me'. And they say, 'No, I'm not angry with you. I'm not angry with you at all. Why should I be? You haven't done anything to make me angry'. And then if you're very open you might say, 'Well, yes, I have really, if only you knew about it' [*Laughter*], and then, of course, the air can be cleared a little bit. So how you stand in relation to spiritual friends, how you stand in relation to the wise, is a very good sort of touchstone of where you are at any given moment. If you're not quite in harmony with them, or if especially there's any overt criticism of you on their part, then the chances are that you have got off the path to some extent.

Padmavajra: Is this *ottapa*?

S: Yes, you could call it that, yes. So this is very useful, and it's [69] quite an important practical criterion of whether you are on the right path, that your spiritual friends are pleased, and satisfied with you. Not in a flattering sort of way, and not just sort of to rub you up the right way as we say, but genuinely, positively, pleased and happy. They're rejoicing in your merits. This is what it amounts to. If you feel your spiritual friends, if you feel the wise, rejoicing in your merits, then you may be sure that you're on the right path. If they seem a little dubious about your merits, even if they seem to be wondering whether you have any merits at all, maybe they're sort of looking for your merits, trying quite hard to find some, then you might start thinking that maybe you're not quite so much on the right path as you'd thought. But you see how this sort of touchstone takes the place of a sort of rigid application of rules. You can find much the same thing in, say, the family, in the case of the way the parents bring up the child. Some parents might even draw up a list of rules for the child to observe, that it has to go to bed at 8 o'clock, that it has to finish off anything it's given to eat, and it can't go out to play after 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Some parents do this. They draw up a list of rules. Some of them even write them out and stick them up on the wall in the kitchen for the children to observe. So you can instil a sort of discipline in that particular way; but there are other parents who do it in a subtler way, and the child is guided or controlled even, in a healthy way, sort of socialised, by its awareness of, or sensitivity to, how the parents feel. And maybe the parents have only got to say in a certain tone of voice, 'don't do that', and the child at once feels the parents don't like it, so he quite naturally just doesn't do that thing, so in that way he picks up, he has a sense of what the parents want him to do and what they don't want him to do. In that way, much more gently and subtly and skilfully, one might say, the child is trained in a positive and healthy way, not through the rather crude and forcible imposition of a list of do's and don'ts. So in the same way we find in the spiritual community, the spiritual community is a community of individuals, they are skilful in their thoughts, words, and deeds by very definition. So if you are in touch with them, in

communication with them, you will pick up from them their sense of values, as it were, and be sensitive to that, and act in accordance with that, without it being necessary for them to lay down hard and fast rules.

Rules are all right in the case of certain broad, general matters, but they don't really go very far, they're not very satisfactory when dealing with quite subtle and complex matters, or subtle and complex people. So the person who has been described in the first two verses, the person who is skilled in his good and wishes to attain the state of calm, and who has the various positive qualities that have been enumerated in these first two verses, he should further not commit any *slight* wrong even, on account of which men who are wise, other men, members of the spiritual community, might have cause to find fault with him. [Pause]

The first sentence of verses four to five actually belongs to verse three, the translator's made a mistake here. And that is, 'May all beings be happy and secure, may their hearts be wholesome.'

Padmavajra: The first line of it, you say, Bhante?

S: The first sentence. Verse four begins with 'Whatever living beings...

Kovida: Why does that one belong to verse three?

S: Why does it? Well, it's just is the metre as it were.

Kovida: I see.

S: Each of these verses consists of four lines, with so many syllables in each line. [Pause] [71]

So the first two and a half verses represent, as it were, the preparation. The sort of person that you've got to be in order to practise what we would call the Metta Bhavana as a means of attaining the state of calm or nirvana. So what follows now should really be in inverted commas. It is what you are thinking, what you are feeling - you being the person who fulfils all the qualifications mentioned in the first two and a half verses - as you sit there and start meditating. This is now how you reflect, or how you reflect even at *other* times, not only at the time of meditation. This particular line represents your characteristic attitude as it were, which is *sukkhino va khemino hontu sabbe satta bhavantu sukhitatta* - 'may all beings be happy and secure. May their hearts be wholesome.' So, as we mentioned yesterday morning, one of the characteristics of metta is that it is a wholehearted desire for the happiness and well-being of other living beings. So that is what you start off by wishing. You might even say that if you fulfilled these conditions - if you are capable, straight, perfectly straight, and so on - then you would be in such a skilful state, healthy frame of mind, that you could not but wish well towards others. Your mental and emotional state would be so positive that automatically, spontaneously, you would wish others, 'May all beings be happy and secure. May their hearts be wholesome.' So, 'May all beings be happy' - this is quite clear - *sukkhino va*. *Sukkhino* is simply happy. *Khemino* - secure. What do you think is meant by secure exactly? What is suggested by this word?

Nick: That they have the Dharma.

S: Yes, that they have the Dharma, but in what does the security consist, as it were?

Padmavajra: You can only be really secure when you're outside conditioned existence. [72]

S: But in a more ordinary sense, in a more general sense.

Mark: Free from danger.

S: Free from danger. Free from disturbance.

_____ : Free from fear.

S: Free from fear. It suggests all these things. So, 'May all beings be happy and secure. May their hearts be wholesome.' Actually the word doesn't mean that. It's *sukkhitatta* - May they be of happy self, *sukkhitatta*. Happy-hearted, you could say, but it is *atta* which is self, or being. 'Happy-served' you could say, if it wasn't such bad English. So what do you think is suggested here? What is the difference between saying 'May they be happy' and 'May they be those whose *self* is happiness'?

Mark: May they wish themselves well.

S: No.

Mike: Is it, in their essence they should be happy?

S: In their *essence* they should be happy. Happiness is not something that they have. Happiness is something which they *are*, not that they are blissful, but that they are bliss themselves. Not that they *have* happiness but that they *are* happy, that they *are* happy. In other words their happiness, their bliss, is entirely within themselves. It doesn't depend upon any external things, any external set of circumstances. So this is what one wishes people, this is how one wishes that they may be when one feels metta, or metta consists in this sort of feeling, this sort of wish.[73]

So this raises a very interesting point. How much really, how strongly really do we wish that others may be happy? I mean how strong a wish on our part is this?

Mahamati: Quite often unfortunately it's the opposite.

S: Mmm.

Mahamati: So one's own happiness seems to rely on everybody else not sort of getting both (*unclear*).

S: Yes. Sometimes you find if you are in a happy mood and you come among people who are not they will almost resent your being happy and want to bring you down to their own level - not that they will try to rise to your level, but they'll try to pull you down to theirs. They don't *like* you to be happy. They take it as suggesting some sort of superiority, and they've got to destroy that superiority, therefore make you miserable and unhappy like themselves. They're not willing to *share* your happiness. So this is very strange, isn't it? Doesn't it seem strange that we shouldn't wish - I don't mean wish in the sense just of wishing, but that we shouldn't be really desirous of - other people's happiness. Doesn't it seem quite strange?

Mike: It's as if there's an idea that there's a limited stock of happiness.

S: Mmm. Yes.

Mike: Someone else is happy, that means that he's taking away the five gallons of happiness you

could be having.

S: Do you think people really feel like that?[74]

Mike: I think it links up with the ideas of love, because I knew one girl, when she was told about the Metta Bhavana, she felt she couldn't practise it, because she had so much love, and she could only direct it to her boyfriend, her brother and her parents [*Laughter*], and if she extended it out, it would get too thin. [*Laughter*]

S: So maybe happiness is like that then, there's not really enough to go all round.

_____ : I think that's some people's idea.

S: Well, I'm sure it's some people's idea about love, that it's as though it is a sort of limited quantity, and you concentrate it all on to one or two or three people, and if you try to spread it around more than that, it just gets diluted. But do you think perhaps there's any truth *at all* in that?

Priyananda: Well, I think possibly there is. I mean in, to a certain extent one needs to develop friendships with a few people. One can't be friends with everyone, say, in a community, one has to stay with a couple of people. I'm just thinking it would become a bit thin.

S: But you could make a distinction, and say your *friendliness* could be directed equally towards all, but not your *friendship*. [*Sounds of agreement*] For instance, like when you do the Order Metta Bhavana, when you direct metta to all the other members of the Order, well, if you had a good session, you might actually feel during that session equal metta, equal friendliness, towards all, but could you be equally *friends* with all? I mean, especially when there's now more than a hundred of them. Even with the best will in the world in a sense it would be quite difficult. So it's as though not just in principle you're friendly, you *are* friendly towards all. Your friendliness, your metta, is directed towards [75] all, but it's as though the practical exemplification, the practical working of that out, in terms of real live friendship, is more limited. But you'd *like* it to be unlimited, if only you had more time, more energy, if you could be ubiquitous. I mean how wonderful it would be to have not only friendliness towards a hundred or more people, or a thousand or more, but a hundred or more, or a thousand or more friendships. But it would seem that the requisite intensity can be generated only with a relatively few people, even if it's just out of considerations of lack of time, energy and so on. You can be *friendly* towards all, but it seems you can't be friends with all, not in a practical way if you see what I mean. For instance, you might feel equally friendly towards two people. You might like them equally well, wish them well equally. But suppose one evening one of them says, 'Let's go and see a film', and the other says, 'Let's go to a concert'. You've got to choose. You can't go with both, you can't *be* with both. You can be friend-ly towards both, but you've actually got to go off with one and not with the other. And it's there perhaps that the question of *friendship* comes in as well as friendliness. It might be you choose to go off to the concert because you like concerts, you're not all that keen on films, so you'd tend to develop a closer *friendship* with that person who likes concerts, just because you do, not because you have any less friendliness in principle towards the other person, but with that first person you have more in common as it were. So there is a sort of distinction to be made perhaps between friendliness, which you may genuinely feel as an experience of metta, and the working out of that in concrete, everyday terms, in terms of the *friendship* - but our *friendships* should not exclude *friendliness* with regard to a whole lot of other people, ideally all people, all beings. [*Pause*] And it might be that eventually you don't even experience friendships in the ordinary sense. You're friendly, or you have friendships with, anybody who happens to come along. You just allow it to be dictated entirely by chance. You take it as it comes. You can

be equally friendly in practice towards all, not just in your mental attitude, but even then the *friendship*, as it were, will be [76] limited by circumstances of the number of people who come along. You might feel genuine friendliness towards the whole human race, but how many members of the human race will you actually ever meet in your lifetime - a few million at the most!

So it's as though there have to be two things; there's the sentiment as we might call it, using that word for the moment, of metta felt towards all, and the friendship which you cultivate towards a much smaller circle of people. It would be a bit suspicious, surely, if you had lots of metta, or professed to have lots of metta towards all beings, but you didn't actually have any friendships. But on the other hand it would be a bit undesired if you had quite flourishing friendships, but you did not have any metta directed outwards towards a wider circle of people, even those you didn't come in very close contact with personally. So really you need both, or the average growing individual needs both or needs to bear both in mind. You need to cultivate the sentiment of friendliness towards all, but also cultivate friendship with a relatively small number of people; but the friendship you cultivate towards the relatively small number of people should not be exclusive in the sense of deliberately excluding any expansion. *[Pause]*

And of course there is this question, as we know very well, of having lots and lots of acquaintances with people you get on with quite well, but no friends. In a way that's quite a sad state to be in. So you need a certain amount of - not exclusiveness, but sort of what we might call 'positive limitation', in order to be able to develop a certain depth and intensity in your metta, so far as your relations with personal friends are concerned. But at the same time it mustn't become exclusive, or possessive or jealous or anything like that; otherwise it becomes more like ordinary love, and that's the near enemy. So 'Whatever living beings there be, feeble or strong, long, stout or medium; short, small or large, seen or unseen, those dwelling far or near, those who are born and those who are to *be* born' - your metta isn't even limited by time, much less still by space - 'May all beings without exception be happy-minded' - or of happy self.[77]

Ye kecu panabhut' atthi, tasa va thavara va anavasesa, digha va ye mahanta va majjhima rassaka anukathathula, dittha va ye va adittha, ye ca dure vasanti avidure, bhuta va sambhavesi va, - sabbe satta bhavantu sukhitatta.

The translator here has given a quite literal translation So all beings whatsoever, obviously not just human beings; all living beings, all sentient beings whatsoever. May they all be happy. So this is your sentiment. And then you go as it were a stage or a step further. You not only develop metta towards them all, you not only *feel* metta, but you wish that they may feel metta towards one another, because if they don't feel metta towards one another, how can they possibly be happy? So you say, 'Let none deceive another, nor despise any person whatever, in any place, in anger or ill-will let him not wish any harm to another.' *[Long pause]*

So this verse suggests in the first place that if you feel metta towards somebody, or if someone feels metta towards some third party, there won't be any question of deceiving them. Metta is incompatible with deceit. So why do you think this is, or *how* is this?

Priyananda: One who is practising metta is straightforward, honest, and therefore can't practise deceit and can't sort of hide anything.

S: Yes, because why should you wish to deceive someone? When is it that you usually try to deceive someone? Is it for *his* good usually? *[Laughter]* It's usually for your own selfish advantage, when you try to deceive or cheat somebody. So if you feel metta towards people, if they feel metta towards one another, there'll be no question of them deceiving or cheating one

another. And also metta is incompatible with *despising* anyone. If people feel metta towards one another, they won't despise one another. They won't look down upon one another. [Pause]

And of course there'll be no question of anger or ill-will. That will be totally excluded, so therefore the verse goes on to say: 'In anger or ill-will, let him not wish any harm to another.' Not just harm, but suffering - dukkha. Anger, the word which is translated as anger, is *vyarosana*, and the word translated as ill will, *patighasanna*. This is not really very good - *vyarosana* is more like hatred; *patigha* is more like malice, though it's a stronger word [78] than that actually. The explanation that is usually given is that when you go, as it were, berserk with rage, to such an extent that you just go on beating and beating somebody, you completely lose control - this is *patigha*. So it is rather stronger than just ill-will, isn't it? It is violent anger manifesting as a repeated attempt, an almost mindless attempt, to wreak harm and suffering on some other person.

Mark: I thought anger was something which could be either well or badly intentioned.

S: Ah, that depends on what one means by anger. We've talked about...

Mark: Anger as divorced from hatred.

S: Ah, but this also raises a question of: can anger be divorced from hatred, or if so, to what extent? This is something we've discussed quite a bit on various seminars. Anyone been present at those discussions?

_____ : Mmmm.

S: It's almost a favourite subject, the difference between anger and hatred. But what is anger to begin with?

Padmavajra: It's an act; you're frustrated, and you just want to get rid of the barrier, quite forcibly.

S: So you could say in a way anger is the result of sort of frustrated energy. It's something like that, without going into it too much. But what about hatred?

Kularatna: A conscious desire to do harm.[79]

S: Yes; hatred involves a definite conscious desire to do harm, and sometimes it's said that cruelty is the sort of gratuitous wish to do harm, or rather the pleasure in inflicting harm and suffering - that is cruelty. When you *enjoy* causing harm to others, you *enjoy* their suffering - this is cruelty. In its extreme form, it's sadism. And malice is the infliction of suffering on people who are completely innocent, and have not offended you in any way, certainly not overtly. This is malice. And then you rage, what is rage? Rage is when you go a bit out of your mind with anger-cum-hatred. So how does anger pass over into hatred?

Mark: Perhaps when you're in conflict with somebody and you lose patience. It's not that you genuinely wish them harm, but you're that sufficiently weak that you cannot contain yourself any more.

S: Yes.

Mark: And it does seem to have its positive aspects. It's a way of communicating with someone your own emotions, and they can finally see what's going on inside you.

Padmavajra: I think one's got to be careful, but when you want to get something done, and something or someone's blocking it, it can be something quite skilful, something quite positive. You know, you just want to get it out of the way.

S: But what I said was how does anger come to pass over into hatred?

Kularatna: I think it's when it's bottled up, and it's not expressed.

S: This raises the question of what we call resentment. But is it *just* that? Is hatred simply bottled-up anger, or anger that has been bottled up for a long time? [80]

Mike: Well, it's as if the bottled-up anger, the bottling-up is the start of letting out even deeper levels, even blacker things - maybe things from years past.

S: Yes. Then why should you hate others. why should you *wish* to do harm to others? Why?

Kularatna: Well, it's one of the very roots, isn't it? Greed, hatred, and delusion.

S: But why should it be there? What does it represent? For instance, do *animals* hate one another? Is it something we've inherited from our animal ancestry? Do they hate? They kill - yes. They destroy, they eat, they fight, but do they *hate*?

_____: No.

S: It's as though hatred is a peculiarly human quality. It's as though when you hate someone, you have a conscious intention of doing them harm, you know what will harm them and you know *how* to harm them, and you have the *wish* and the *will* to harm them. So what does *that* mean? Why should you wish to harm others, why should you hate others?

Mahamati: Does it arise out of an awareness of what one wants and what one doesn't want - you're trying to be separated from them...

Padmavajra: Is it a kind of competitiveness?

S: I don't think it's just that, even animals have that. They compete for certain things.

Priyananda: It seems there's a certain element of time or memory involved, that one could just sort of store up memories and events about that particular person or object, and they've gone unexpressed for a long time, and because of this [81] one has built up an emotion of hatred, whereas before it would have been just anger, perhaps, and it would have been just immediately expressed as anger.

S: I think there are two points that one can make here. One is that it seems that hatred in the sense that I've described it is experienced when the other person is experienced as a *threat*. Not an ordinary sort of threat but something quite deep-rooted, not the sort of threat that an animal would feel - not just in a sense of danger to life, or something like that - but a sort of psychological threat, a threat to your psychological security. It's then that you start feeling hatred, it seems. In a more *broad* way, there is a definition of hatred by Spinoza. Spinoza said, 'Hatred is the idea of suffering' - he means the *experience* of suffering - 'accompanied by the idea of an external cause'. But even that doesn't seem really sufficient, because supposing you are suffering, supposing you realise that somebody else is causing that suffering, your natural

tendency is to get *rid* of that cause, to get *rid* of that person, so therefore hatred has the sort of characteristic of rejecting, but you wouldn't necessarily want to inflict harm or suffering *on* that person. So this is where I think the element of *time* comes in. That if the frustration, if the suffering, or if the feeling of threat has been prolonged, something builds up within you which we call hatred. You don't only want to remove the obstruction, you don't only want to remove your own suffering, you want to retaliate, you want to pay out the other person as it were, by inflicting suffering on him or on her.

Padmavajra: Sometimes I find people who I don't know, and I might have known them for a couple of days or something, and immediately I don't like them. I mean, really don't - without them even doing anything - (*unclear*) so that would take (*unclear*). [82]

S: Well, this sort of quite instantaneous liking or disliking can have all sorts of causes. It can be just biological, that they don't attract you erotically, or even repel you erotically, it can mean that. Or it can mean that there's some sort of emotional quality about them that you don't like, that you pick up on and react to. They might remind you unconsciously of somebody else, maybe a parent or a brother that you don't get on well with, or your ex-wife, and so on. There can be all sorts of explanations for these sort of (*unclear*) quite quickly developing likes or dislikes.

Mike: With this time lag now, isn't it really possible to feel hatred against someone who isn't the actual cause of the suffering, and who isn't actually a friend, but who reminds one, or for some reason slots into the role of, say...?

S: Yes, oh yes.

Mike:... of say, the parent...

S: Yes, well, this is just what we call projection. I've sometimes thought - in fact I've sometimes said - that it's as though each person has a sort of definite quantity of resentment, or even hatred, as it were, left over from their early experience of life, which they have - this is not really in the spiritual context, this is within the psychological context - to let out. Supposing you take the example of a community. You find for instance that two people within that community don't get on well together, they dislike each other. One might even hate the other. All right, so you think that you'll solve the problem by removing one of those people, so that leaves that one person who gets on quite well with all the other members of the community, so there wouldn't be any problem. So you take away that second person, leaving, apparently, the first person [83] without anybody in the community that he dislikes. But you find maybe in the course of a few weeks or a few months, that he starts disliking some *other* member of the community, so what does that suggest? It's as though he does have a sort of definite limited stock of resentment or hatred which has to find some sort of expression on some sort of object, and clearly that feeling is not connected with the objective situation. It's as though deep down he is still hating somebody in his past, and that hatred gets projected on to almost anybody who happens to be around them, that it can latch on to for some quite superficial reason. So sometimes the anger sparks off real hatred on this deeper level and we get then quite carried away. So no doubt anger as such just by itself, in a sense of that energy which is restricted and frustrated, which eventually bursts through the restriction by just exploding, is relatively healthy and it is at least in those early stages quite a different thing from hatred, though it may build up into hatred under certain circumstances sometimes.

So it is hatred that is the real opposite, the real far enemy, of metta. Anger is really an inappropriate term here.

Mahamati: If you are talking of a certain quantity of resentment and hatred from the past which one can as it were get rid of, having got rid of that certain quantity, would you then say that there would also be a more sort of deep hatred, that there isn't a definite quantity of because it's more a way of being?

S: Yes, it's a pattern, a way of being, as you say.

Mike: I don't understand this idea of a deeper hatred, that lower spark of resentment.

S: Well, what actually is hatred? It comes back to what I said about [84] hatred being the reaction to anything that is felt or experienced as a threat. So what is the basic threat? It is to you yourself, or to your self-image, let us say. So, so long as you *have* a self in that limited sense, it must be susceptible to threat, and therefore susceptible to hatred. So if you look at things in terms of, say, karma and rebirth, for so long as you've *been* an embodied being, then you've been prone to hatred. You've reacted with hatred to all those situations which *threaten* the integrity of your existence, your conditioned existence, that is. So therefore it's as though hatred is woven into the texture of your being, just like greed, just like your tendency to appropriate things and to try to weave them into the structure of *your* being, incorporate them into the structure of your being. So it's a very sort of basic thing, and perhaps we do tend to see others more as threats, and therefore have this tendency to feel hatred towards them - in fact sometimes to feel it very easily - and that's why perhaps it's quite difficult to reverse the whole process and just feel metta instead, because that would suggest you didn't feel any threat any more from anybody, that you didn't identify yourself with your contingent being or contingent personality as you did before. So, so long as you are a sort of mundane personality, you cannot but feel hatred, or at least the potential of hatred will be there, and you can detect it in yourself sometimes, a little flash of real hatred that might come just for an instant, but it's there, before you can be aware of it almost, certainly before you can suppress it.

Moralists have commented on this peculiar phenomenon, that sometimes you feel pleasure in the disappointments and even in the sufferings, provided they're not too serious, of your friends, and this is a very odd thing indeed. Why is that? Well, clearly, even though they were friends perhaps, they were presenting a kind of threat, so if they're put down a little bit, if they're disappointed, or some suffering or misfortune befalls them, the threat is removed to some extent because they're made, as it were, less powerful. You can't help feeling pleasure at that, however much you might like them. And if you're very observant, you notice these little [85] sort of flashes of pleasure, and this is why, I think, one moralist said words to this effect - it is strange that there is somehow something pleasant to us in the misfortunes of our friends.

Mahamati: Sometimes people are our friends precisely because they don't constitute a threat.

S: Well, this can be taken in two ways. There are two ways in which they can't constitute a threat: one, because you're so open to them that the question of a threat doesn't arise, and, two, that you think that they're so weak that they couldn't hurt you in any way. So if you have friends in that second sense, you're not really friends at all. It is the person with whom you have been very open who could in a sense do you real harm if the situation changed. That's why ex-wives and ex-husbands do each other usually so much harm. They know each other's weak spots. But perhaps in that sort of situation there hasn't been very much real openness, not as you get in friendship in this sense, in the sense of Kalyana Mitrata. So it isn't easy to develop positive emotions, is it? We started off by saying that we don't really experience a very strong wish for the happiness and well-being of others; we don't sort of wake up in the morning and think, 'Oh, I really wish everybody would be happy today.' We don't do that, do we? Not generally, anyway. Even if we go down into the shrine room, and start grinding away at our Metta Bhavana

[Laughter], even after an hour often the results aren't very promising, sometimes. We don't feel ourselves exactly carried away by a wave of universal love or anything like that. So why should this be? We can only explain it in terms of our evolutionary past and our state as conditioned beings, very aware of possible threats from the environment. *[Pause]* [86]

It's very easy to detect or to recognise people whose early life has been quite happy and free from threat, because they're much more open and happy and carefree and receptive in their attitude towards other people. Some others are closed, suspicious, excluding, afraid and so on. It does make one realise what a long way the world as a whole has to go. It isn't surprising that there are great conflicts and misunderstandings, because people are so prone to hatred, to ill-will.

So these verses from 'Whatever living beings there be', down to '...let him not wish any harm to another', these represent one's own reflections as it were. One's own aspiration, or even one's own actual practice of the Metta Bhavana. The first two and a half verses represent one's preparation for that [87] and the next half verse and two verses - four and five - represent the actual experience or the actual practice of metta. *[Pause]* So these verses suggest, harking back to verse three or the first half of verse three - these verses suggest that within the spiritual community there will be metta and there will be happiness, more than you will find in the world at large, and if you don't find that greater degree of metta and greater degree of happiness within the spiritual community, it just isn't the spiritual community.

So one might say it's a very high ideal which is upheld here, the ideal of metta. I used to be really surprised when I was in the East among Eastern Buddhists, that metta was regarded as a very easy, simple little practice that anybody could do, and two minutes of it was quite enough at any one time. They really do undervalue it, and it's even said, and I think Buddhaghosa bears some responsibility for this, that metta doesn't carry you very far on your journey towards Enlightenment. I think again that this is a great mistake.

Padmavajra: I remember being told that by a guy who came to a beginners' class... *[unclear words]* Theravada teaching says, 'Oh, metta only gets you to such and such a state of consciousness'. And I mean isn't there...*(unclear)* Mahayana *(unclear)*, Maha maitri, something that is as important.

S: So how does one make the connection? Is at least the modern Theravada - because their attitude is not really borne out by some of the actual Pali texts - is the modern Theravada really right in, as it were, devaluing metta in this way?

Kularatna: It seems not, from what we've been saying, because you get the feeling that if you really take the opportunity to learn it, then it's almost like an insight.

S: Yes, if you have literally the same metta towards others that you have towards yourself, assuming to begin with that you experience a very powerful metta towards yourself, you have virtually abolished the distinction of self and others, and to that extent the experience of metta does amount to insight. I mean insight can have non-conceptual [88] forms. This is the important point. Or rather it need not be expressed in conceptual terms. So if you do act out of metta as though there's no difference between yourself and others - if you do treat others just as you treat yourself; if others are just as near and dear to you as you are to your own self - then surely you are no longer under the power of the illusion of selfhood. So even though you may not experience it in a sort of cognitive fashion, you certainly have developed insight, you have as it were the emotional equivalent of insight. And as we shall see, the aim of metta is to become equal with regard to all living beings. You don't discriminate among living beings at all, including yourself. You have the same metta, the same intense metta, towards all living beings

whatsoever. So in those circumstances, where is the feeling or the experience of self? It just disappears. So one could say that metta isn't just an easy, simple, elementary, introductory little state. It's much much more than that. Why do you think metta *has* been undervalued in modern times in some forms of Buddhism, and by some teachers, including some meditation teachers?

Lokamitra: They concentrate on vipassana.

S: Or what they think of as vipassana. It's a result of this whole quite pervasive over-valuation of the rational and the scholastic, and the, as it were, intellectual.

Padmavajra: Also there may be confusion over the idea of emotions being kind of wrong somehow. Sometimes you can read in some texts the word 'emotion', and that's kind of classified as being wrong in itself, or unskillful.

S: Well, putting it technically, all emotion is *klesa*. That is not really the Buddhist view. All emotion, that is to say, is a defilement, so that is not actually the truly Buddhist view. There are *positive* mental events as well as negative.

Mike: Does it come from confusion of emotion and passion?

S: Yes, of course. But the Theravada texts themselves make it *abundantly* clear that there are positive emotions, skillful emotions, skillful mental events, which are not defilements [*Pause*].

[89] It's as though this text as a whole is concerned with metta almost as a way in itself, do you see that? Mrs Rhys Davids, for instance, felt that the teaching of the four brahma viharas, including the metta brahma vihara, was so out of keeping with the rest of early Buddhism, she thought it must have been introduced by somebody other than the Buddha, and have got later on incorporated into the Buddha's teaching. But one can understand this. There is a certain incompatibility between this sort of teaching and some of the later, more scholastic presentations of the teaching, but she herself also realised that those scholastic presentations are usually very much later than the time of the Buddha, or at least some time later. And no doubt the Buddha's own teaching was very much closer to this sort of approach than is often realised. Sometimes the Buddha himself is represented as a bit of an intellectual, a bit of a *scholastic* almost. Well, we can see from ancient texts, like the *Sutta Nipata* and the *Udana*, he wasn't really like that at all.

I can't help wondering why beings are specified in so many different ways. Why this was considered necessary. 'Whatever living beings, whether feeble or strong, long, stout or medium; short, small or large: seen or unseen; those dwelling far or near; those who are born and those who are to be born - may all beings without exception be happy-minded' - why do you think this is? Why did whoever composed the text, if it wasn't the Buddha, let's say, feel it necessary to go into this sort of detail?

Kularatna: It's describing a meditation practice, isn't it?

S: Describing a meditation practice.

Kularatna: You should imagine all these people.

S: Yes, it's an actual sort of exercise, because it isn't all that easy to develop metta, yes? So there are different ways of doing it; bit by bit, stage by stage. One way of course is developing it towards first oneself, then a near and dear friend, then a neutral person and so on, as we do it; but another way is classifying in other ways. There is a practice where you direct your metta towards

all the beings in the East, all the beings in the South direction, all the beings in the West, then the North, then up and then down. That's another practice, and so here there's another one still. Here you think of all feeble, weak people, then all strong, healthy people; long - presumably [90] that means tall - people, stout people, medium-sized people, short people, etc., etc., down to those you see, those you don't see. Perhaps 'seen' and 'unseen' means those that are big enough to be seen, and those that are too small to be seen, like even microbes and so on. 'Those dwelling far or those dwelling near; those who are born and those who are to be born' - you think of them all in turn - this is just to give yourself practice in metta, an opportunity of amplifying and deepening your experience of metta. Otherwise, if you say, 'May all living beings be happy' and then pass on to the next practice, you don't get very far. You have to do it in *detail* as it were, just as we do with our five stages of metta practice. So it's an exercise. This is why it's so detailed. Just as when you are reflecting on impermanence, you have a whole list of things which are impermanent, and you go over them. You call them to mind one by one, just to intensify that experience or feeling of impermanence. Also there's another possible reason, that is to say it's to counteract any possible irrational dislike you have. You might have a dislike of tall, thin people or short, fat people, and so on. There's no accounting for tastes or distastes.

Mahamati: Is the practice that we do a traditional one?

S: That is traditional, yes. You find this in the *Visuddhi-Magga*.

Lokamitra: There are quite a few variations, then.

S: There are, yes. *[Pause]*

Padmavajra: Can I ask a question about the actual metta practice? I've twice now taken meditation courses. I've had people who've had a bit of trouble with the second stage because they're either homosexual or bisexual, and when they're in the second stage they choose a near and dear friend, and I said choose somebody of the same sex, etc., and they have trouble because erotic feelings come up, and yet I don't feel it's right to well choose somebody of the opposite sex. I don't think that kind of answers the question.

S: Well, the thing to do is to say choose someone of either sex, with regard to whom you have definite feelings of friendliness and affection, without any erotic feelings. But if someone's feelings of [91] friendliness are invariably associated with erotic feelings, they're going to find it quite difficult to develop metta.

Padmavajra: Yes.

S: But usually there is somebody that you feel quite warmly towards without any admixture of erotic feelings. If there isn't you are in a very difficult position, not an impossible one, but a little difficult.

Mahamati: I find if one gets to know somebody quite closely that erotic feelings do arise, it's quite natural, it seems one can't separate them.

S: Well, that is perhaps because one undoubtedly has a reservoir of erotic feeling, and to some extent that erotic feeling becomes allied with feelings of affection, so that when the one arises, there is the tendency for the other to arise, yes? Sometimes the erotic feeling comes first and then the affection comes along later - or maybe it doesn't come along - and sometimes the feeling of affection comes first and the erotic feeling comes along afterwards, or maybe it doesn't. But in some cases you get both together.

Mahamati: Should one steer clear of... I'm not quite clear whether one can't use somebody towards whom one does have some sort of erotic feeling in one's metta practice, in the second stage, because maybe one has quite a close friendship with them, but just an element of it is of an erotic nature.

S: At best I think one could regard that as an intermediate stage, no more than that. It is the metta that you are trying to develop, and that does have the *pema*, as it is called in Buddhism, the attachment kind of love, including sexual love, as its near enemy, and you can't really experience the two together. You can experience both for the same person, but not at the same time.

Mahamati: Ah, yes.

S: The one is exclusive of the other *at that time*.

Padmavajra: Surely the important thing is that you don't become stuck in such a state, as has been described. You're just stuck [92] with that person, you can't extend your feelings... even a bit blissed in some kind of erotic element that has come up in the practice.

Mark: When we talk about this, it does seem to exclude whole classes of people from consideration, doesn't it?

S: In what way?

Mark: Well, of people you consider friends, you can only choose those of your own age and sex.

S: But why is this? I mean, why is this limitation introduced?

Mark: Well, I understand that it's the reason you described, that you want to get away from an erotic or morbid sensation; but people out of your own age group, I don't quite see the restriction there.

S: Ah, well, the reason there is that usually people of an older generation represent sort of authority figures. You may have a sort of fear, or you may experience a lack of openness with them, which is incompatible with the development of the metta. This is not that you cannot *possibly* have metta towards someone very much older or very much younger, of course you can. But generally it isn't like that. Generally the difference of age does make that sort of difference.

Mark: I see, having generated metta towards easier targets as it were, you can then extend it.

S: That's right, because you end up directing it towards all. And there are some sects which say specifically, all men and all women, for instance, because by the time you've reached that level, you transcend the level of sexual attraction and repulsion altogether, so you are able to experience the metta literally towards everybody, whether they're older or younger, the same sex or a different sex, and so on. But yes, you do start with the easier targets, towards those people with regard to whom it is relatively more easy to develop metta. Just as you wouldn't start off trying to develop metta towards someone that you really hated - that would make it just too difficult - in the same way it would be really difficult [93] to start developing metta towards someone to whom you had a violent sexual attraction.

Mahamati: It almost seems as though you should say in the second stage, don't choose anybody to whom you're sexually attracted, because it seems that quite a few people do feel attraction to

their own sex.

S: Yes, this is the essence of the matter. Don't try directing your metta towards anybody that you normally feel sexually attracted to, yes.

Mahamati: Would that be an acceptable way of introducing the practice in a class?

S: Let me think a minute. Yes, I think so if you have one or two illustrations just to make it quite clear. Probably some clever chap is going to say 'Well, what about your own self?' You might have a certain erotic feeling for yourself. *[Laughter]* Well, there's no alternative then because there's only you to start with - well, you're stuck with yourself for better or for worse. *[Laughter]* Just as if you hate yourself, well, too bad. You can't love anybody, you can't feel metta for anybody unless you feel it for yourself first so you've got to direct it towards yourself. So even if you do sort of erotically excite yourself *[Laughter]*, even *thinking* of yourself excites you, *[Laughter]* well you just have to accept the situation and work on it! And I'm told that there *are* such people. *[Laughter]*

Mike: I had a slightly similar problem, once in doing the practice, in sort of extending in the last stage. In one area of the world, I just thought of a person I knew who lived there and that brought an immediate block because I realised suddenly all the negative feelings I had towards her, so the next time I did the practice I put her in the fourth slot and immediately all sorts of erotic feelings came up, and I didn't know what to do with that. The next time I was very aware that she was the person I really saw as my enemy figure, I chose someone else I didn't have any erotic feelings towards. That seemed to have some positive effect when it came to dealing with her, but is that really the best way of dealing with something like that?

S: It may be because the more strongly you feel genuine metta towards one person, the more easy it is to experience it towards somebody else. So it may be a question of retreating towards the easier target temporarily so that you can [94] then go forward to deal with the person you have greater difficulty with. Or you may decide to face it out. If you do, then of course what is important is that you note, say, in the case you mentioned, the erotic feelings, the sexual feelings that arose, you just recognise them but you go on trying to cultivate metta towards that person. You don't indulge the feelings of anger or hatred or the sexual feelings. You just recognise them. You note that they're there and go on trying to develop the metta. If you're feeling particularly heroic you could do that. But if you feel it's too much for you, that more has come up than one is able to handle, all right, just retreat temporarily from the situation and strengthen your metta towards some other person so that you are relatively full of metta and then go back to the first person and then you'll find it more easy to feel metta towards them rather than some other unskilful emotion. But it's not easy to follow a middle path between - what shall I say? - blocking and just allowing completely free, i.e. unmindful, expression of what one feels. If there are any feelings in relation to any particular person of which you're not conscious it is better that you become conscious of them, even though that may create difficulties for you for the time being. But eventually you have to go beyond that.

There's also a quite important point made by one of the speakers yesterday, I forget which one it was, possibly Sagaramati, that one should not confuse feelings which are essentially different. One should recognise if for instance it is ordinary human friendship - all right, recognise it as that - don't sort of attempt to dress it up to something higher than it actually is. Don't try to idealise it or romanticise it or glamorise it. It may be that you decide you're going to have just an ordinary friendship with someone that isn't going to be a spiritual friendship. Fair enough. It is quite healthy and human as Sagaramati pointed out. But don't want to idealise that and make it out to be terribly spiritual when everybody else can see it just isn't, it's just ordinary, just an

ordinary friendship - which is all right, it's fine, it's healthy, maybe does you some good, but it's not a *spiritual* friendship. [95] That's something different. I think this is something that we have to learn to do, to accept things for what they are, because if we're trying to dress them up as something better or higher than they really are it means we've really basically got an uneasy conscience about them. We're not quite happy about them. We think maybe we ought not to be into them, but we ought to be into something like *spiritual* friendship because that's spiritual, so we try to dress up our ordinary friendships, even sometimes our erotic relationships, as spiritual friendships, which is terrible, which is disastrous! I spoke about this at some length when somebody came to see me a couple of years ago in fact, wrote to me also, wanting to have a Buddhist wedding, and I told her quite frankly that what I thought was happening was she had a sort of feeling there was something a bit wrong about sex, because marriage means sex one understands, at least to some extent, so to make it all right there had to be as it were a few drops of holy water sprinkled on the whole affair so that it became sort of spiritual and she could feel it was a sort of sacrament as it were. It wasn't just sex, oh no, dear no! It wasn't that, it was something sort of holy because the holy *words* had been said over it and the holy *water* had been sprinkled on it. So this shows what you really feel about that particular kind of relationship. You feel it is in need of sanctification. So you feel as it were unconsciously it's in need of sanctification - on your conscious level you're evaluating it more highly than it should be evaluated.

Mahamati: So does that mean that sex has always got an element of unskilfulness in it - any erotic feelings?

S: I wouldn't say the *erotic* is necessarily unskilful but it can so easily, and so quickly, almost instantaneously take an unskilful direction, that one has to be very careful. As purely a physical experience one could say that it is neither skilful nor unskilful, but it can certainly become unskilful very quickly and easily when things like possessiveness and jealousy and so on come in. I have sometimes said that if sex grew upon trees like bananas there'd be nothing wrong with it, but unfortunately - well I say unfortunately, I'm not quite sure [96] about that - it doesn't. [Laughter]

Kovida: At that point it ceases to be erotic if you've got something else, doesn't it? You've made it something else.

S: Yes.

Kovida: It ceases to be erotic.

S: Yes. It seems to be a purely as it were aesthetic experience, that is to say, an experience of the senses, pure and simple, like you might feel the sunlight or you might feel the wind. It seems to be something like that. It's bound up with all sorts of 'personal' things, many of which are unskilful and negative. I mean this is when William Blake says something like, 'He who binds himself to a joy, does the winged life destroy, but he who kisses the joy as it flies, lives in eternity's sunrise.' Of course it's very easy to misunderstand and misuse that. It doesn't suggest a sort of superficial, cynical, exploitive attitude. Sometimes it might be taken like that, but a genuinely sort of detached attitude. But again there's infinite room for self-deception and rationalisation, as everybody knows. But that shouldn't make us deny the positive principle which is there or at least a positive possibility that is there. I would say that for most people in the West, Christian moral teaching and so forth has so sort of vitiated people's experience of the erotic that it's almost impossible for most people to have any sort of even humanly healthy experience of it. It's so usually riddled with feelings of guilt and so on.

Kularatna: Even in the younger so-called liberated...

S: Well, in what does their liberation consist? What does it amount to, after all? *[Laughter]* It's just another fashion. You follow the latest fashion, you're called liberated, and if you're following the fashion before that, you're an old fogey. *[Laughter]* But no doubt to the extent that Christianity has less influence, and to the extent that the younger generation is less influenced by Christianity, Christian moral teaching, the younger generation is less healthy - sorry, more healthy - Freudian slip. *[Laughter]* Where is this younger generation, you might see one or two of them in the FWBO but are the schools and the colleges of the land full of them? Are the shops and offices and factories full of them? [97] I rather doubt it.

Mark: I rather thought it was the younger generation more prevalent and involved (*unclear*) ... that there's been a backlash of..

S: It does seem that there has been, yes.

Mike: I would have thought that in the sense of the waning Christian influence, it's not necessarily that positive because it's the sort of modern atheism without knowing it, it's just sort of taken over so much of the Christian morality. It might be that (*unclear*) there's nothing wrong with pre-marital sex.

S: Right, yes.

Mike: But it doesn't go *beyond* that.

S: Well, this is one of the things one is struck by when one reads about the great Victorians, and say how revolutionary they were in the sphere of religion and some were agnostics, and some were even atheists, etc., etc., but when it came down to morals there was no difference whatever between them and the average churchgoer. If anything they were even more insistent about morals in that way, and they'd say things like, 'Well, I may be an atheist but don't think I'm immoral.' *[Laughter]* So in practice there was no difference between them and anybody else.

Mark: In the Revolution in Russia, you probably know that the government encouraged free love and within a very short space of time they reinstated marriage as a civil ceremony because there were far too many children in the country.

S: Well, you don't want hordes of little hooligan children. They're bad enough even when they've been socialised to some extent. But there are other ways no doubt of coping with the situation, rather than harking back to marriage in the old-fashioned sense, the nuclear family.

Mahamati: I'm still trying to work out the relationship between metta and the erotic. If you say that it's almost impossible for people to experience the erotic. I mean could one sort of...

S: Well, put it this way, we ought to distinguish, I think, between the erotic and the sexual.

Mahamati: What would that distinction be?

S: The erotic, I would say, though other people might define it differently, the [98] erotic is more concerned with sense contact, especially skin contact, whereas the sexual is definitely, let us say, genital and reproductive and these can be as it were separated and separately experienced. One could say there was a greater possibility of mindfulness in connection with the erotic than in connection with the sexual *in this sense*. So one might say that defining the erotic in this way

there might possibly be some association of the erotic and the metta, but not of the specifically sexual and the metta. They, those two I think, will definitely be very difficult to experience at the same time, towards the same person. You might be able to manage some sort of combination of the erotic and metta but not of the sexual and metta.

Mahamati: Rather like aesthetic appreciation in general.

S: Yes, a *bit* like that. though it isn't quite aesthetic appreciation in a more emotional sense because it does involve a question of actual contact. But I think people should be quite honest with themselves as to what it is that they're actually experiencing, whether it's sex or eros or metta, and not feel the need to delude themselves. Not sort of claim that it's heaven or that it's divine or it's some sort of enlightenment experience when it's only the same old moderately satisfactory sex experience. *[Laughter]* Otherwise you're excluding the possibility of something even higher and further or even more satisfying. Just accept your experience for what in fact it is. Otherwise it suggests you want to dress it up as something grander and more ideal - it almost suggests that you're ashamed of it. You think you ought not to be having it, so therefore you try to make out that it's something different. Like maybe if you're living with somebody and your parents don't like it, so you try to reassure them by saying, 'Well we're really married. It's as good as being married.' That old word marriage will reassure them, you know, and make them feel happy, but you may not be thinking in those terms at all. But it makes it sound a bit more respectable. But you can do the same with other emotions. Instead of saying, yes, I did get angry - you say, no, I felt *righteous indignation*. *[Laughter]* You see? Rather than admit that, yes, you got angry or that you lost your temper. It's very important that we just recognise our emotions, our mental [99] states, for what they actually are, and don't try to dress them up in any way. We're just quite realistic about them. *[Some very remote background noises]*. Is there some unscheduled event happening in there?

_____ : Probably just having tea.

S: Do you feel like a break?

_____ : A quick cup of tea.

S: Go on then. If you permit I suppose it's all right. *[Laughter]*

[Tea Break]

[Passage of text/seminar not recorded]

Kovida: ...this verse.

S: *Veda* or *paramaveda*, and each *veda* has attached to it texts called Brahmanas. Those texts have attached to them other texts called Aranyakas, they have texts attached to them called Upanishads and it's the Upanishads which are called the *Vedanta* in the sense that they are the *anta*, the end, or the essence of all the vedas. They are the more philosophical treatises though greatly mixed with mythology and ritual matters. So the (*unclear*) systems of Hindu philosophy, especially those called the Vedanta again, are based on those Upanishads. So Vedanta philosophy is a very loose term. There are six systems of Indian philosophy, that is Hindu philosophy, there's the Samkhya, the Yoga, the Nyaya, Vaishesika, then the Purva Mimamsa and the Uttara Mimamsa. Strictly speaking it's the Uttara Mimamsa that is called Vedanta and there are five or six kinds of that, all based on different interpretations; one of the Upanishads, two of the Bhagavad Gita and three of the Brahma Sutras.

_____ : Gulp. *[Laughter]*

S: If you say that the Buddha is predicted in the Vedanta, do you mean in the Upanishads, do you mean in the systems of Indian philosophy, that is the Vedanta system which are all *later* than the Buddha? Some of the Upanishads are earlier than the Buddha, some are later, but to the best of my knowledge there's no prediction of the Buddha in any of them.

Mike: This young gentleman had studied Bhakti Yoga, in a place set up by [Maharishi Devendranath] Tagore.

S: Ah, that was in Shantiniketan.

Mike: Yes. [100]

S: There are one or two references to the Buddha in later Hindu texts called the Puranas, which are very considerably later than the Buddha, though of course Hindu tradition regards them as being thousands and thousands of years before the Buddha. He might be referring to those. They've no special connection with the Vedanta. They're definitely later than the Buddha and they refer to the Buddha in a highly uncomplimentary fashion, as a false teacher. He might possibly have been referring to those but they certainly couldn't be referred to as the Vedanta. One is the Padma Purana - there are 18 puranas and 18 upapuranas and there's the odd reference to the Buddha in a very few of them, but they're definitely medieval in formation and they're never called the Vedanta. A little learning is a dangerous thing. *[Laughter]*

Priyananda: *[Laughter makes beginning unclear]* He was the sort of type who would like to...

S: Well, say, 'show me'. Say 'In which of the...?'

Mark: *[Talks at same time as Bhante]*... has to be involved in (*unclear*) .

Lokamitra: The Buddha was recognised later on as an incarnation of Vishnu.

S: Yes.

Lokamitra: And he was recognised as a true teacher but his...

S: No, he wasn't.

Lokamitra: His Dharma was not, was recognised as false Dharma, something like this, wasn't it?

S: Yes, He was truly a teacher in the sense of being an Avatar of Vishnu but his teaching was all wrong and not to be followed. *[Laughter]* You see the Avataravada teaching says whenever there is a decline of Dharma on earth, Vishnu incarnates to put the situation right. So that there are ten incarnations, including the tenth which is yet to come. The Buddha is the ninth, the *navatara*. So what they say is, at least what one particular text says, and orthodox Hindus follow this, was that originally sacrifices were performed in India, animal sacrifices and so on, and of course this is the Dharma, this is the true religion, etc. - I'm just trying to remember the details - oh yes, and if you perform sacrifices, of course you gain great merit and great *punya* and so on and so [101] forth. So what has happened, the asuras had started performing sacrifices, so in this way they gained a lot of merit and they were able to defeat the gods in battle, so the gods came to Vishnu

and said 'Please, help us', so Vishnu helped them by descending to earth and incarnating as the Buddha, who then proceeded to teach the asuras that performing animal sacrifices was wicked - you see the little connection with Buddhism - and therefore the asuras stopped performing sacrifices, therefore they lost their merits and therefore they could be easily defeated by the gods. Having gone back to heaven, having done his job, Vishnu, the Buddha, went back to heaven. This is the Brahmin version of the Buddha and his life, you see, and his teaching. So therefore they say the Buddha is truly the incarnation of Vishnu, therefore you should worship the Buddha, but his teaching should not be followed because it was a deliberately false teaching meant to mislead the asuras, not to be followed by human beings. *[Laughter]* Do you see how cunning they are? And this is actually the attitude of the modern orthodox Hindu - worship the Buddha, yes, but don't follow his teaching. Have no respect for his teaching. Disregard his teaching.

Mahamati: They really believe this, do they?

S: They really do believe this, yes. *[Laughter]*

Mike: There were some that we met who seemed to be quite open and positive when they discovered that we *were* Buddhists. You meet sort of Brahmins, well-westernised to certain extents.

S: Well, they know a little bit more about Buddhism so they tried to - what I've mentioned is the old orthodox view. But Westernised Hindus know a bit about Buddhism, they know that the orthodox view can't be sustained so they try to say the Buddha only restated the teaching of the Upanishads. It's all the same. So they're quite happy that you're a Buddhist because a Westerner has become some kind of *Hindu*. The Buddhists are a caste of Hinduism, this is what some of them say. So you have endless trouble sorting out all this tangle.[102]

Lokamitra: Well!

S: I'm really glad from that point of view that Padmavajra's going with you. *[Laughter]* You're sort of doctrinal troubleshooter-in-chief.

Lokamitra: Yes, that's it. *[Laughter]* I'm trying to convince Kularatna (*unclear*).

S: Kularatna prefers more indirect methods. *[Laughter]* The silent smile.

Kovida: The seductive.

S: But then they will say a Hindu doesn't mean anybody following a particular doctrine, it means anyone who is following a teaching originating in India. They'll try and introduce some semantic confusion. Anyway we'd better get back to our text, otherwise we'll be in some semantic confusion.

So verse seven. There's probably quite a lot to be said about this. 'Just as a mother would protect her only child, at the risk of her own life, even so let him cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings.' *Matha yatha niyam puttam ayusa ekaputtam anurakkhe, evam pi sabbabhutesu manasam bhavaye aparimanam.* The original is a little more emphatic. It doesn't just say 'her only child'. It says her child, or even her son, her only child or her only son. Yes? *[Pause]* So what does this suggest? The fact that the boundless heart or the limitless mind that you should develop towards all living beings is compared with the sort of attitude that the mother has towards her child, even her *only* child. What does that suggest?

Padmavajra: Really strong.

S: Yes, but a bit more generally than that.

Nick: That there may be things to threaten as he develops.

S: A bit more generally than that. Why the comparison with the mother?

Lokamitra: She cares.

S: Well, even more generally than that. It suggests that mother's love is the highest kind of human love. This is why the comparison is with mother's love. [103] So to what extent do you think that that is true?

Mark: It's traditionally true.

S: It's traditionally true, yes.

Priyananda: Putting it in the sort of psychological, human, healthy state, that form of love which occurs just on a human level, the highest form of it is that between a mother and a child, or a mother for the child.

S: So you think that is true?

Mark: Well, the Indians are very much into mother worship.

S: They indeed are. But do you think it is actually the strongest form of ordinary human affection?

Priyananda: No. Looking at other relationships, I would say that friendship, I mean say between people of the same sex, probably is stronger.

S: Well, if it is a question of strength, you could say even ordinary sexual life, between persons of *different* sexes is probably at least as strong, if not stronger. But why is mother's love especially singled out? Is it necessarily because it is the strongest?

Nick: Because there is a degree of instinct about it, perhaps.

S: There is a degree of instinct, but why should *that* be relevant? Your metta isn't an instinctual sort of thing, is it?

Kovida: I think there's a slight element of disinterest in (*unclear*) purely biological (*unclear*)

Lokamitra: Come what may, she's going to be there for you.

Kovida: It's her job to look after the children.

S: Yes, though, it is what is called nurturant love. This is why the mother's love is as it were more suitable as an *analogy* for metta. You're not really comparing the two. You're not saying that metta is like mother's love literally speaking, but there is an analogy between the two, because the mother's love nurtures the child. The mother looks after the child. She wants the child to be well. She wants her child to be happy. In the same way metta as it were looks after,

would like to nurture all living beings. It would like all living beings to be well, like them to be happy. So there's an analogy between the purely biological instinctual nurturing love of the mother and the much more aware, more conscious, as it were spiritual, love which we call metta, which is also on its own higher level a *nurturing* attitude. You want other beings to grow, to develop, to be well, to be happy. Just as the mother wants her child to grow, and to be well and to be happy; but in a sense for opposite reasons - you could say in a way that a mother's love is disinterested but in a way it isn't because for the mother the child is a sort of extension of her own being, and it's as natural for the mother to love her child as it is for her to love herself. But that doesn't represent a real transcending of self, as you have in the case of the experience of metta, strictly speaking.

Priyananda: We should remember that it is an analogy, it's not...

S: We should remember that it is an analogy, yes. Mother-love is not metta. But metta is analogous to mother-love. You're not necessarily being more full of metta because you're trying to mother everybody. *[Laughter]*

_____ : Matronising. [105]

S: Yes, right.

Mike: It could be a great disservice.

S: It could be a great disservice, just as mother's love prolonged beyond the period when you really need it can also be a great disservice to the growing boy, the growing adolescent, the growing youth.

Mike: Jory's term for it is 'smother love' at that stage.

S: I think that's a standard term. It's said to be very common in the United States of America. It's sometimes called 'momism' in its more general forms (*unclear*) more philosophically formulated. The great god is mom *[Laughter]*. But this does draw attention to an aspect of metta which I think hasn't been mentioned before and that is the fact that it says 'would protect her only child at the risk of her own life'. This is as it were the almost sacrificial aspect of metta, that out of metta you're willing even to sacrifice yourself for others if necessary. Not that you hate yourself or you prefer others to yourself even, but you objectively see that their need is greater than yours, so quite objectively you prefer that their needs should be fulfilled rather than yours, even though it means maybe your *life* being sacrificed. Maybe sacrifice isn't quite the right word here. You're just being objective about the situation.

Lokamitra: Doesn't Buddhaghosa say, I haven't read it directly but, that if all of four people were held up by a highwayman, if... *[Bhante talks over voice]*.

S: Self, friend, neutral and enemy.

Lokamitra: ...you had to offer one to be killed as it were, you couldn't choose.

S: Right. You wouldn't be able to say.

Lokamitra: You wouldn't say yourself. You wouldn't say your enemy.

S: Yes. Because you have an even-minded attitude. Well, objectively, it might be possible to

spare one more easily than the others, in which case you don't mind it being you. [Laughter] And of course sometimes it happens that the mother's love, let's use that term, for the child, is so unaware and so foolish that she does the child harm even right from the beginning. She might be willing to give her life for the child. On the other hand she might bring it up so badly as to do serious damage because she just doesn't know any better, or because certain instincts are so strong, certain emotions are so strong.

Padmavajra: Metta really does contain awareness, wisdom... (*unclear*) ... just emotion without kind of seeing anything.

S: Yes, because if you aspire for the good of others, you must *understand* what is their good, otherwise you just become a do-gooder, relentlessly doing good to other people regardless of whether they want it or whether it's really good for them at all. It's like the boy-scout who went back to his scout-troop, asked whether he'd done his good deed for the day, and he said, 'Oh yes, I helped an old lady across the road.' So the scoutmaster said, 'Well, that wasn't very much of a thing to do, that wasn't very difficult.' So the boy said, 'Oh yes it was, she didn't *want* to cross the road!' [Laughter]. [106]

So metta mustn't be like *that*, you see. I mean it's a silly story but it does illustrate a truth doesn't it? So your metta should not mean doing for people the things they don't want done for them and which may not even be *good* for them. So you must know, you must understand, you must be able to *see* what constitutes the good of another person as well as your own good, to being able to do any real good at all, and the world is full of people trying to do good, but only making the situation worse. How can you really do good unless you have a clear understanding of life? You can't possibly. [Pause]

So we see a sort of progression. You could say that so far, the sutta could be divided into three sections: the first describes the sort of qualities that somebody should possess who wishes to reach the state of calm or Nirvana; the second describes how he should practise metta bhavana; and the third, that is to say verse 7, tries to give one some idea of the intensity of that metta by way of an analogy, that is to say an analogy with the loving of the mother for her child. [Pause] One could perhaps divide in greater detail and say that the first half of the first verse is sort of introductory. It introduces the goal which is the state of calm or Nirvana, and suggests that this is to be attained by someone who is skilled in what is his good, in what is good for him - so that's the goal. Then in general, how one should behave so as to *reach* that goal, that's the second half of verse 1, and verse 2, the first half of verse 3 - how one should behave in general. And then the second half of verse 3, then verse 4 and verse 5 - how one should in particular practise the metta bhavana. And then verse 7 - what that metta actually is by way of the analogy with the love of the mother for her child. It's really quite a tall order that one should feel, in respect of metta, the same intensity of metta towards all beings that the mother feels towards her child. Here, the great difference between metta and the love that the mother has for the child, which makes it clear that this is only an analogy, because the mother's love is exclusive, whereas metta is all-inclusive.

Padmavajra: She might even do harm to those beings that are going to do harm to her child.

S: Yes, or she might even do harm to other children that she thinks in the future might do harm. There are many stories about this, jealous step-mother, all that kind of thing. So one could say that you don't really have a positive state, a positive mental attitude towards somebody if on account of that so-called positive mental state towards somebody, you're inclined to do some harm towards some *other* person, some third person. Do you see what I mean? So the mother's attitude towards her child is not wholly or completely positive, because on account of that attitude she would perform actions with regard to others which were quite negative and

unspiritual. [Pause]

Lokamitra: There is a question, Bhante, about emotion generally, which is sort of quite related to this. You talked before of Dr Mehta's thing that if you feel an emotion strongly you transfer that feeling towards, say, in our case, the Buddha or Bodhisattva. Yes? [107] This has been puzzling me a bit at times. Can you explain this a bit? If you feel an unskilful emotion, then you transfer it as it were on to...

S: I think this is basically related to the question of integration, especially integration of emotions. You can't be really integrated unless all your emotions, all your feelings, ultimately go towards one object. Do you see what I mean?

Lokamitra: Yes.

S: So, what he was getting at was that even if you have a sort of unskilful emotion, an emotion which has some other being feeling as an object, direct it, say, in this case towards the Buddha because that is the ultimately integrating factor inasmuch as it is the highest as it were. That is where all your energies eventually do have to go. So he sometimes used to say - this is putting it quite extremely - if you feel angry, be angry with the Buddha. It's better to be angry with the Buddha than to be angry with anybody else, if you have to be angry at all. Do you see what I mean? Because in the anger there's energy and where do all your energies ultimately have to go? - in the direction of Nirvana or Buddhahood or whatever.

Lokamitra: The same for lust, the same for any unskilful...

S: Same for any unskilful emotion. Because to the extent that you're aware of, say, the Buddha, to that extent the mental state is positive, even if you're aware of Buddha in, as it were, a slightly unskilful way or even in a very unskilful way. Do you see the...?

Padmavajra: I can see the idea about the energy, but I don't quite like the idea of hating the Buddha. That sounds like really unskilful to me. I can see the idea of energy going towards the ideal if you like, but to hate the Buddha just sounds...

S: Perhaps, I think what he had in mind was that you could say in a manner of speaking that the Buddha was more able to handle your hatred or anger than another being. Yes? The fact that even though angry or even hating, you were at the same time aware of the Buddha, your awareness of the Buddha would in time have a transforming effect upon the anger and it would cease to be anger.

Padmavajra: Maybe if you were in a state of hatred and you thought of the Buddha, it would have the effect of taking the hatred out of it anyway.

S: While retaining the energy.

Padmavajra: Yes.

Lokamitra: You'd have to resolve it in a way, if you did carry it through to the Buddha.

S: Yes. Perhaps he didn't put it as accurately or correctly as he might have done. Maybe one should say that in the act of directing or *trying* to direct your anger towards the Buddha, the anger would get dissolved.

Padmavajra: It seems a bit sort of tantric to me. I mean it sounds as though *[Laughter]* you know... [108]

S: He'd probably take that as a compliment.

Padmavajra: You know some sort of thing you'd be instructed to do if you were doing some kind of weird...

S: No, it is actually not an unusual sort of attitude in some forms of devotional Hinduism.

Padmavajra: It's not in Buddhism?

S: No, not that I recollect. No, it doesn't sound actually very Buddhistic, I would say. But the important point is that all one's energies, emotional energies, are eventually to be unified. There can't be anything left outside, as it were.

Padmavajra: Would you personally recommend that?

S: I'm not sure. I see the point. I can't say that I can feel very enthusiastic about it. I remember when he used to talk in this way, I used to feel a certain reservation. Though I could at the same time see the point of it. So if anybody was to find it actually helpful I wouldn't be inclined to object.

Padmavajra: I can see the thing about - in the lecture on the Wheel of Life, you kind of turn hatred, say, into wisdom, you make it try and switch in that way, but to like put it into the Buddha...

S: So the question is *how* do you turn it? It's not so easy. He's suggesting this is one of the ways in which one could actually effect that change, that transformation. It's easy enough to say, here I've got this anger and hatred, all I've got to do is to turn it into love - simple. But how do you do it? *[Pause]*

Mark: By analysis.

S: By analysis. This is Santideva's way in the *Bodhicaryavatara*, by reflection, by reflecting on the painful consequences of your unskilful state of anger and hatred and so on.

Mike: Doesn't intellectual analysis, though, really depend as a method on being quite integrated between your feelings and your mind?

S: Yes, otherwise your feelings won't follow the analysis, as it were. Some people would go on analysing indefinitely and their feelings remain just as they were.

Mahamati: In a way it's quite a healthy counterbalance to say that if you're going to hate, direct it at the Buddha, because the Buddha can take it.

S: And also of course in the context of Christianity you'd never be advised to hate God.

Mahamati: That would be sin, wouldn't it?

S: Yes, because, well, yes, it would be a sin. And how *could* you hate God, because he *loves* you? *[Laughter]* And he *made* you. So maybe for some Western people the idea of being allowed and

encouraged to hate the Buddha could be quite liberating. At least break up a bit of their old conditioning.

Padmavajra: Incredible visions of... (*unclear*) [*Laughter*] [109]

Lokamitra: If he had any real feelings for the Buddha, it wouldn't get very far anyway.

S: It's more a question of placing your feelings *on* - for instance, you see, when you make the transition from one stage of the metta to another, supposing you go, say, from stage two to stage three, that is to say the near and dear friend, to the neutral person, so let's suppose that you've practised the metta, and you've developed the metta towards the near and dear friend quite successfully, so then you change the object from being the near and dear friend, it becomes the neutral person. So what actually happens when you make that change? You take away, say, the near and dear friend, but you're left with the metta, you're left in that sort of state, just like for instance you might be reading a book, and even after you've closed the book you remain for a while in the state of mind induced by the book. In the same way, say, as you see a film. It might linger for days. In the same way when you end the development of metta towards the near and dear friend, you take away the near and dear friend, you no longer think about him, his visual image is no longer there, but you still have that feeling of metta, and then you substitute the image of some neutral person. So there you have the image of that neutral person *and* the feeling of metta. To begin with they're just as it were side by side - there's the figure of the neutral person, here's the metta which you actually are experiencing, but it's not exactly a metta *for* that neutral person to begin with. Do you see what I mean? There's a sort of gap between the two, they don't quite connect. You do experience metta, but not exactly for that person that you're thinking of now. But if you sort of try, you can put the metta on to that neutral person so that you are just feeling the metta, but feeling the metta for that person, and then they cease to be neutral. And then of course you do the same thing with the enemy, even, and all the energy that was formerly in the hatred for that person reinforces the metta, and you end up actually liking that person and feeling metta towards them.

So it's rather the same, let's say, if you feel anger, and you're asked to direct it towards the Buddha. *Actually* you don't direct it towards the Buddha - what actually happens is you are left with the anger, the feeling of anger, but instead of thinking of the person that you originally were thinking of and being angry with, you are now thinking of the Buddha, but the two don't come together. There's the anger and then there's the thought of the Buddha. So if you sort of hold them there, it's as though the emotion of anger cannot stay in the presence of that thought of the Buddha. Just as the neutrality of the neutral person cannot persist in the face as it were of the metta that you brought over from your practice with regard to your near and dear friend. So it isn't as though actually you transfer the hatred to the Buddha, you actually are hating the Buddha; no, you've got the emotion of hatred, together with the *thought* of the Buddha, say - the idea of the Buddha, but to the extent that you've got the thought of the Buddha, you've got a *feeling* for the Buddha and the feeling that you have for the Buddha will start as it were, melting away that emotion of anger which is in your mind because it's quite incompatible. So actually [110] it isn't literally that you hate the Buddha instead of hating somebody else, not psychologically speaking. Even though the idea of hating the Buddha rather than any other living being, is quite a positive one, as an idea.

Nick: So then it's not likely that the anger would have a detrimental effect on one's devotional side.

S: In that case it would be unlikely, yes.

Lokamitra: Probably *helping* it.

Nick: By the feeling of that energy coming up?

Lokamitra: Yes.

S: Because if you are experiencing a certain emotion, and instead of the object of that emotion, suddenly there is substituted an object with regard to whom the emotion would be inappropriate, the effect is that the emotion subsides. Yes? For instance, just to give a rather crude example - this crude example sometimes makes things a bit clear - supposing you're strongly attracted, that is to say sexually, by some woman that you see, and you feel definitely sort of sexually aroused. And then you suddenly discover it's not a woman at all - it's a man. So your sexual feeling just automatically subsides, yes? You've mistaken the *object* as it were. Do you see what I mean? So in the same way suppose you feel angry with some living being, and then you substitute another object, i.e. the Buddha, the anger just can't sort of stay, because it's so inappropriate in relation to the Buddha, so it just abruptly subsides. So this suggests a technique; that if you want to get rid of an emotion, form a mental image of a person with regard to whom the emotion is inappropriate and it will then subside. So I think it's *this* that maybe Dr Mehta was getting at or should have been getting at.

Lokamitra: He wrote in a book about it, but it never came across quite as clearly like that.

Mahamati: I must say it ties in with something I've thought about quite often, which is that if, say, somebody feels metta towards one person and then somebody else comes along and immediately you're feeling the opposite, you hate them, was that really metta? It so quickly changed into the opposite. It wasn't exactly, very probably, sincere.

S: It would seem very strange if it were very quickly to change. I mean if your mental state was to change.

Mahamati: Because sometimes it's easy that the word metta is overused - one says that one feels metta when in fact one doesn't feel it to all living beings. [111]

S: Though at the same time you can't do everything at once. Your metta may none the less be genuine as far as it goes, even though it *isn't* yet infinite. We were talking about the extension in that sense in the afternoon, but on the other hand if it was so weak that it was easily disturbed in that way one might doubt whether it was really metta at all. There's the story which I told some time ago about the man who got so angry because someone came into a room and disturbed him when he was practising metta bhavana [*Laughter*]. Or when you're very restless immediately after *any* meditation, the question arises to what extent you really were meditating. So if you are in a state of metta, then immediately afterwards someone happened to come along and you get really irritated, it does raise the question of whether it really was metta. Even if it was the genuine thing it must have been very very weak and faint to be disturbed so easily. I mean even if you've been practising, say, for ten minutes in the metta bhavana practice, and the neutral person comes along and then the enemy comes along in your imagination, even in those few minutes you're able to generate some metta towards them. But if you're not able to generate it or feel it still towards somebody who comes along a few minutes later clearly there hasn't been very much metta generated at all, even if it *was* metta that was generated. Metta shouldn't be too delicate a plant. It should survive a little transplantation into the outside world. It should bloom for a few hours perhaps anyway.

Anyway, there's ten minutes to go till lunch, so let's leave it there, shall we, and finish the last

verses this afternoon.

[Next Session]

S: All right, verse 8.

‘Let his thoughts of boundless love pervade the whole world, above, below and across without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any obstructions, without any hatred, without any enmity.’ This is quite literal. So let me just look up *asapattam* to see whether that is really well rendered by enmity. *Vera* is hatred, so *averam* is, without any hatred, but *asapattam*, let me just check that. [Pause] Yes, without any enemy or foe. Yes, there is a difference, it isn’t without any enmity, it is without any *enemy*, a subtle difference. In other words, you regard nobody as an enemy.

Kularatna: Which word is that?

S: The last one, *asapattam*. Without any enmity should really be literally without any *enemy*. In feminine form, it’s rather interesting, the feminine form of the noun means without co-wife, or rival in marriage - which is rather interesting, isn’t it? In other words, the co-wife seems virtually equated with an enemy. Again, possessiveness. [112]

All right, so what is this verse telling us about metta?

Mark: It flows.

S: What should metta be?

Kularatna: Universal.

S: It should be universal, without any sort of exception. This really underlines the difference between metta and ordinary love including mother’s love. It’s perhaps rather interesting that this verse comes immediately after the previous one. It’s as though it’s to safeguard against any possibility of misunderstanding, that, yes, your metta should be like the mother’s love, at least analogous to that, certainly very intense; in a way, selfless and nurturant, but it mustn’t be like mother’s love in one important respect and that is its exclusiveness. Unlike the love of the mother for the child, metta should be without any limitation, without any obstruction whatever. And this of course applies not only to metta, the first of the *brahma viharas*, but to the others as well, that is to say to *karuna*, *mudita* and *upekkha*. And the four *brahma viharas* as you know are called the four infinitudes, the four boundless states, the four *appamannas*. Perhaps one could formulate it as a sort of general rule or general principle that positive emotion, to the extent that it is positive, is not exclusive. Do you see this? If you do genuinely feel metta you feel it towards, in principle at least, *all*. Or even if you don’t actually feel it towards all, it has a naturally expanding or expansive tendency. The same with *karuna*. You don’t feel compassion just towards a certain number of people. The natural tendency of *karuna*, to the extent that it is a truly positive emotion, is to go on expanding. The same with *mudita*, the same with *upekkha*.

Padmavajra: Do you think that is with all positive emotions?

S: How would faith as it were be limited or exclusive? Or, say, devotion? Devotion perhaps is more appropriate to consider in this sense.

Padmavajra: You’d only have devotions to those - I mean you wouldn’t have devotion to everything and everybody.

S: It reminds me of an incident I related in my memoirs told me by Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap about his own experience in Penang. Do you remember that? Shortly after his ordination he went to Penang and he was entertained by the Chinese Buddhists there who, of course, were Mahayanists and they took him to their temple. So he very carefully saluted the image of the Buddha, but being a Theravadin at that time he refrained, equally carefully, from saluting the images of the Bodhisattvas. Do you remember that story? Anyway his Chinese Buddhist host [113] taught him a little lesson and after that he saluted the Bodhisattvas, so you could say that that was an example on his part to begin with of exclusivity of devotion. But why was it exclusive, or what constituted its exclusiveness?

_____ : He didn't recognise those things, those Bodhisattvas, as being worthy of devotion.

S: Yes, but why not? What made him not recognise that?

_____ : Thought they weren't Buddhist.

Kovida: Ignorant.

Mark: His conditioning.

S: Yes, but more precisely than that. I mean he didn't recognise that the Bodhisattvas in fact represented exactly what the *Buddha* represented. Bodhisattvas at the very least represent or embody or symbolise different aspects of Enlightenment. If he hadn't wanted to salute, say, a Hindu god or the Taoist god - that would have been different, that wouldn't have been any limitation on his devotion, because they would not have represented the same *thing* as the Buddha. But the Bodhisattvas represent what the Buddha represents. They represent Enlightenment. So if one feels devotion towards the Buddha, one should equally feel devotion towards the Bodhisattvas because they embody or represent the same thing. So this is an example of how another positive emotion can be exclusive - and what makes it exclusive - yes, it's some kind of conditioning, it's some kind of mental limitation, some kind of mental blindness. Perhaps you can't see, you don't understand that the Bodhisattvas *do* in fact represent the same thing as the Buddha represents essentially. They stand for the same thing. They stand for wisdom, they stand for compassion, etc., so why should you not feel devotion for them? But if you feel devotion for the Buddha, it's only natural that you should feel devotion for the Bodhisattvas. If you don't it's due to the operation of some kind of exclusiveness. But if you really feel devotion for the Buddha, and are sensitive to what it is the Buddha represents, when you come into contact with the Bodhisattvas or images of the Bodhisattvas, you'll feel the presence of that same thing there.

So this is the way in which devotion can be exclusive. What about other positive emotions? What about rejoicing in merits? Could that be exclusive? I mean you could for instance rejoice in merits in an exclusive way if you appreciated good actions only when they were done by people that you *liked*. Yes? But you should be able to appreciate positive actions and rejoice in the merits of people who perform positive actions even when you don't get on with them particularly well, even if they may be against you. If they do happen to do [114] something good you should be able to rejoice in their merits, just as much as in the merits of your friends.

Padmavajra: Or you might just rejoice in their merits when they're affecting *you* in a good way.

S: That's true, yes. Well, that wouldn't really be rejoicing in merits. Perhaps that would be *more* than a limitation. You'd just be pleased they were treating you well. That would be a different thing from rejoicing in their merits on that occasion, though you might conceivably also do that.

What other positive emotions are there?

Lokamitra: There are the four *brahma viharas*.

S: You couldn't have an exclusive equanimity. That's a contradiction in terms, because equanimity comes only when all your positive emotions are equally directed towards all beings. That is equanimity.

Kovida: The near-enemies of both, then, in a way are exclusive.

S: Yes. Exclusive attitudes, yes. So clearly it is too much to expect at the beginning that everybody's positive emotion should be completely equal, and universal and unlimited, but at least they should have a sort of in-built tendency to expand and to become more and more inclusive.

Priyananda: By definition there really can't be such a thing as a limited positive emotion?

S: No, it may be limited for the time being, in the sense that at this very moment of time it is not actually universal, but its tendency should be to become universal. This is what I mean by saying it should be expanding. In other words including a wider and ever wider cycle of living beings, whether it is metta, whether it is mudita or anything else. If it isn't, then it isn't really positive. You could say that a positive emotion which is not expanding is not really a positive emotion. A positive emotion by its very nature is expansive - with regard to the number of living beings to whom it refers, or towards whom it is felt. [115] *[Pause]* You could say in this way, coming down to earth with a bump, that sex cannot be a positive emotion, because the possibilities of expansion are strictly limited. Metta can go further. Metta can take in hundreds, it can take in thousands, it can take in millions of people. But your sexual feelings even, not to speak of activity, your sexual feelings, can't go as far as that. They'll just fall short. Metta can just go on expanding and expanding but sexual feelings will just collapse after a while. So that's quite a thought in a way, isn't it? You won't feel the metta ever tiring or anything like that, or that you've had enough. No. It'll just go on ever sort of constantly renewing itself and expanding and becoming brighter and stronger as it does so. *[Pause]* So you could therefore say that the positive emotions are of an essentially spiral character. That is also involved or implied, isn't it? You don't get any reaction from them. You don't feel as though you've had enough. You could in a sense say you've had enough of metta for the time being, thank you, but only because it's not the metta that you've had enough of, it's the effort and the struggle to develop the metta. It's *that* that you might get tired of. But to the extent that you actually experience the metta, the experience itself has a tendency just to go on expanding and growing. But with less skilful emotions, you get tired of them after a while, they react to their opposite. You get either bored or sated or you just want something different.

Mark: Doesn't that mean that once you contact any metta, it should just carry on growing and growing?

S: Yes.

Mark: So why doesn't it? *[Laughter]*

S: The pull from your own as it were more unskilful side. You find it very difficult to be positive. But to the extent that you actually achieve it and experience it and realise it, it has a tendency to expand. Once you get really into it, this is what you feel, what you experience, until a pull comes from some other part of your being which is not participating in it.

Kularatna: I suppose this is in a way looking at stream entry - that there'd be a pull where the expansion would be more than the gravitational pull, pulling you back.

S: Yes, though as far as I know this isn't actually stated, one could say that once one becomes a stream entrant one's actual experience is that one's emotions do become steadily more and more positive and more and more expansive and taking in more and more beings; that one actually *experiences* this and it doesn't sort of diminish, but this happens steadily all the time. There's never any backsliding or any reaction. So also you should get happier and happier. So it seems quite clear then that metta, like the other positive emotions, especially the other *brahma viharas*, is essentially non-exclusive, but when an emotion *is* exclusive, [116] what does that imply, what does it mean, to say that an emotion is exclusive? What is happening? What are you doing?

Mahamati: Well, when one wants something for oneself.

S: One wants something for oneself, so there's a constant self-reference. The emotional, the activity to which the emotion gives rise, is constantly as it were turning back upon oneself. Whereas in the case of the expanding, the positive emotion, there's no self-reference. There's no sort of turning back upon oneself, or to oneself. But in the case of the exclusive emotion, it's as though the question arises, 'What is there in this for me?' So the more the metta expands, the less exclusive it becomes, the more *universal* it becomes, less and less is there any reference to self. One could look at it sort of diagrammatically - I don't know whether this is going to work - it's only just occurred to me. But suppose we look at it like that - so suppose this is you - maybe I can do it on the back of one of these. [*Transcriber's note: Bhante now proceeds to draw something which, of course, cannot be transcribed!*] Supposing this is you - let's make it more like you. [*Laughter*]. Anyway it's clearer that way. Supposing this is you, this little knot. All right, then here's what seems to be your positive emotion going up like that out of you. This is your positive emotion. But actually what happens is that after a while it sort of comes round like this and eventually - yes? So emotion in a way, yes, it is outward going, e-motion, but it sort of curves round because of its self-reference in that way. Now this is the very narrow, limited, sort of emotion, but you could have one which went like this - much bigger, stronger, more powerful, but then again, it could go like this. So what do these illustrate, could you say? [*Pause and Laughter*] Well, it's obvious, isn't it.?

Mahamati: They're both self-oriented but one's more powerful than the other one.

S: Yes, So what kind of state could this, for instance, illustrate?

Kularatna: The big one?

S: Yes.

Kularatna: Well, extrovert.

S: No I wasn't thinking quite like that. I'll make it easy. This could illustrate a sort of dhyana state which is *still mundane* - you go quite far out, you circle quite far out. You take in a sort of higher, wider reach of consciousness, but you *gradually* circle out. There's a sort of ultimate self-reference which makes it mundane and not transcendental, yes. So you can see so long as the positive emotion, though still positive, is still ultimately mundane, however big the circle, ultimately it comes back to you, in ever subtler and more subtle forms. But the real positive emotion, in the higher sense would be that it starts off like this, it seems to sort of... - yes - but no, it's just saved! [117]

_____ : Hurrah!

S: That is when it becomes transcendental. In other words this would be the positive emotion of the stream-entrant. But it's as though you can't *really* go off like that, until you've made quite a big loop. This represents your ordinary, let's say it positively, say your ordinary love, and this might represent, say, spiritual friendship in the ordinary sense. But there is still some self-reference. It only becomes really clear of self-reference when you get up on to that spiral and the positive spiritual emotion becomes specifically transcendental. Anyway, that's to demonstrate those points. But in any case there is this sort of *expansive* tendency of the positive emotion. The only thing is that where it's mundane, even though it is expansive, it circles round and there is an ultimate reference to the self. Or you could put it in another way and say that the self-reference becomes ever more and more subtle, more difficult to detect, because the self, itself, is becoming more and more subtle all the time.

Priyananda: A question which I was going to ask about metta. I seem to remember reading, I think it's in the *Survey*, there is this distinction between a mundane metta, a mundane positive emotion, and the transcendental positive emotion. I don't know if I've remembered incorrectly, but is there this distinction between the sort of mundane and transcendental positive emotions?

S: Yes, it would be, putting it in technical terms it would be that there are skilful mental states which are associated with the *asavas* and which are not associated or which are associated with the path, that is to say the transcendental path or *not* associated with that. If, for instance, you had positive mental events arising in conjunction with insight, then the fact that they arose in conjunction with insight would mean that inasmuch as they were *transformed* by the insight they would be positive mental events which were of a transcendental nature. But if they did not arise in association or in conjunction with insight they would be merely mundane, even though positive and skilful. And of course they could react to their opposites if the supporting factors were removed.

Priyananda: They would be transcendental if they were associated with insight.

S: Yes, it's the association with insight or wisdom which makes them transcendental. This is the usual traditional way of putting it, which suggests a sort of distinction, even division, between the emotional and the intellectual, *so to speak*. Now we have questioned that earlier today, haven't we? You could say that the emotional does not *have* to be translated into terms of the intellectual. You could say that it is possible to have metta equally towards all. You don't need to say that metta is positive when it's associated with insight into the fact that there's no distinction between yourself [118] and others - well, that insight is virtually there when you in fact, in terms of your metta, make no distinction between yourself and others. It is there. Do you see what I mean? *[Long pause]*

So it's a really very important point, a very important distinction, though we in a way overlook it, that the truly positive emotion is not exclusive. It has no tendency to be exclusive or to become exclusive, and the more positive it is, the more expansive and less exclusive it is. *[Pause]* So if people did in fact experience, generally, positive emotion in this sense, in this way, clearly the whole atmosphere of society would be completely different. But certainly one should be able to experience this within the spiritual community - to feel that... I've made use of this illustration but even this has its limitations, it isn't that the lines, so to speak, of metta radiate out from this stable centre - the centre itself is expanding; the expansion of the metta represents an expansion of the self *itself*. Do you see what I mean? To have a positive, an emotionally positive self, to be emotionally positive means to be oneself expanding. So you can speak in terms of eliminating

self, you can also speak in terms of protracting yourself to infinity, or expanding yourself to infinity. You can either speak of abolishing the self or of universalising the self. By universalising the self, I don't mean transforming it into some kind of conceptual hypothesis in a purely conceptual way, just in the abstract, but that your experience of selfhood should be an *expanding* experience. Yes?

Kularatna: Could you say in a way that what your self was was that tendency for your emotions to circle round like that?

S: Yes, you could say that.

Kularatna: And that once they start spiralling out you lose that...

S: Yes, exactly. You could say that that in a way is the spiritual life - when the whole movement and tendency of your being is expansive and spiral rather than circular and reactive and returning upon itself all the time. You can then forget yourself because you just go on as it were indefinitely, happily, expanding. You forget yourself in the sense that you don't feel that need to make that *reference* to self. That just doesn't arise any more, that question. So you just go on expanding. So self-forgetfulness is the sort of forgetting to refer back to yourself. That is in a way unselfishness also. You don't ask, what's in this for me, what does it mean for me? What do I get out of it? That sort of thought doesn't occur to you.

Lokamitra: In a way it's an orientation of being.

S: Though the word 'being' is in a way not a very Buddhistic word. It's rather an orientation of becoming. [119]

Lokamitra: Yes.

S: So also you notice that if you feel happy you feel as though you're expanding. That if you're miserable and unhappy, how do you feel? Sort of constricted, crushed, as though there's a weight on you. Don't you feel like that? I don't mean now [*Laughter*], but when you do feel in that sort of state.

Mike: People look like that too.

S: They look - they're bowed down as though there's a heavy weight on them. That is caused by their psychological feeling of being burdened and restricted, which is the opposite of expansion. So if you feel happy you feel light, you feel as though you could fly, you feel ecstatic, standing outside yourself, carried away outside yourself. So this shows quite clearly that positive emotion is essentially expansive. But you don't feel like that when you're dull and depressed or even angry.

Lokamitra: You notice very much in negative states that you do think very much in terms of yourself and drawing things to you and you think of other things only in relation to yourself or in terms of yourself. Well, I notice it. It's not present when you're positive.

S: Yes. And this is why when you're in a happy, expansive mood, and truly so, you can pay more attention to other people, you can give them more attention, you can give them yourself more. Whereas if you're feeling downcast and miserable, and someone meets you and starts talking to you about their troubles, you can't sort of wait to start getting a word in about *your* troubles, and convert him into a listener. So the fact that positive emotions are not exclusive means also that

they are expansive, that they have this inherent tendency to become more and more universal, and therefore happy and therefore light. We had this expression earlier on which was translated as, what was it? - of light livelihood - and it wasn't literally livelihood, but it was certainly light - *lahuka* - because the positive is associated with the light, light in weight, which is psychologically experienced as light rather than heavy. So if you're positive you're also light-hearted, or high-spirited. So we talk of a *deep* depression, we don't talk of a *high* depression. We talk of being high, and being low. Don't we?

_____ : *Heavy* depression.

Kovida: Down in the dumps.

S: Down in the dumps. Up in the air. Up in the clouds. Head in the clouds. These are all sort of somewhat positive states. So the very terminology, the very nomenclature, reflects certain psychological truths almost. So one can see even from these considerations that truly positive emotion, or emotion to the extent that it *is* positive, cannot be exclusive, cannot have this sort of reference to self. [*Pause*] [120]

It also occurs to me that expanding has got something to do with growing, or growing with expanding. If you experience metta you expand, let us say, but metta also is that which surely helps *others* to expand or to grow. This is why it is said that the mother's love is nurturant, it helps the child to grow, it's necessary to the child's growth. So one might say that metta is not only itself expansive, it is a cause of expansion in others, because if you want others to be happy, at the same time you want them to be full of metta, because if they're not full of metta towards one another and are fighting and quarrelling with one another and inflicting harm and suffering on one another, how can they be happy? So to wish that they may be happy is to wish that they may be full of metta. Yes? So if out of metta you wish that they may be happy, out of metta you must wish that they should be full of metta. In other words if you are expanding yourself, emotionally, you must wish that *they* should expand also emotionally. So again this is one of the signs of metta, that you have the effect on others of making them, or helping them, to expand. If your effect on others is depressing and discouraging and dispiriting, it isn't really metta. You might say, 'Oh, I'm saying this out of metta for you', but the result is that you just feel depressed and downcast, it can hardly be metta. But it doesn't have that genuinely sort of tonic or expansive effect.

Kovida: You could say that the mother (*unclear*) help them to grow up...

S: Say that again.

Kovida: You help them to grow up.

S: Yes.

Kovida:... (*unclear*)

S: Right, yes.

Kovida: You help them grow up.

S: Yes, bringing up. If only they would.

_____ : So you say that metta will always have a positive effect on other people?

S: Yes. For instance, supposing you were pointing out to somebody something that they have done which is unskillful. I tend to think - I won't be completely certain here, but I tend to think or tend to feel - that if you pointed it out in a really positive way, with real metta, the person to whom you had pointed out that he or she was doing something unskillful, would feel *better* for it having been pointed out to them. Unless of course they were not themselves basically sincere in their attitude, etc., but I'm assuming within the context of, say, a satisfactory or successful relationship of kalyana mitrata, if you pointed out something that someone was doing that was unskillful, and pointed it out with metta, they would not feel put down by what you said. If anything they would feel *liberated* by what you said. [121]

Priyananda: Quite often you find that unless you do have a feeling of metta, when you're pointing out something unskillful to someone, they don't even listen, they don't feel receptive to that. But then if you do do that, it's somehow far more effective.

S: Yes, of course there is the possibility - human beings being as it were free - for them to *exclude* your metta. The fact that you speak with metta doesn't mean they've got to listen and cannot but listen - no, they may refuse to respond. This is why I said within the context of a satisfactory or successful kalyana mitra relationship, a relationship of spiritual friendship. I think that if in that context, with metta, you pointed out a fault, something unskillful, the person then would not feel put down or made to look small or anything like that, but would feel genuinely liberated. So that is one of the criteria, and sometimes unfortunately we almost use our rightness to put people down. Have you noticed that? Do you see what I mean?

Priyananda: There's almost a sort of glee in proving yourself right and...

S: Yes, or better. Here a sort of competitiveness comes in. So you mustn't use your alleged metta in that way.

Padmavajra: I often get the idea that developing metta and compassion, you also have to develop at the same time, almost like in a separate kind of practice, a kind of skillful means, wisdom, and yet it seems that if you do the metta properly that will come naturally because you will find out the best ways to help people.

S: Yes.

Kularatna: Do you think these positive emotions automatically have awareness associated with them?

S: Well, if you practise metta, you are aware of other beings, presumably you are aware of yourself too. The same with the other *brahma viharas* at least. It is certainly a sort of bright state. Perhaps there isn't the same sort of clarity that you get with - I was going to say actual insight, but let's say just with - insight. Maybe metta simply does not amount to insight. There's a certain brightness but maybe there isn't that same clarity and in that sense that same clear awareness that you find in the case of insight. But certainly it is heading in that direction. It is *brightening* one might say, or *clarifying* to the extent that it is *expanding*. When it's completely expanded, when it's completely universal - which in a way is a contradiction in terms, it's almost like having a circle of infinite circumference - then, of course, it's completely clear. There's no experience of selfhood, and therefore of course there is complete insight and wisdom. But you see how important it is to cultivate this mood, as it were, of positive emotion, feeling of expansion and lightness and joy it would amount to also, whereas this is not the sort of feeling that one usually associates with what we generally refer to as religion. You might feel a bit uplifted by beautiful

tapering gothic spires but not really by much more than that. I mean the interior of many churches is very dull and heavy, close, stuffy, etc. You find that with some of the Hindu temples.

Kularatna: I find that even when they're inspiring, there's a sort of heaviness about them, isn't there?

S: Yes.

Mike: I think a lot has to do with what's been going on in the churches. A year ago at Easter I went to Bruges for a weekend which I had seen superficially before. And I went specifically because it's such a beautiful city and so I went trotting around the various churches which from the outside looked quite good and I really wanted to go into them in the sense of works of art, but I fled from about half a dozen and I didn't bother to go to any others because it was as if I had sort of been prayed into them - there was such a repressive atmosphere.

I remember when I went to Delft a few years ago with Vajrakumara, we were staying with Vajrayogini and she took us along to Delft and we went into what was called the Nieuwe Kerk, the new Church of the seventeenth century, Vajrakumara felt so ill inside that he had to leave at once and it was really a very strange atmosphere indeed. It was a Calvinist church.

Mike: Even worse.

S: Yes. It was converted to Protestantism at the time of the Reformation. The atmosphere was one of death and that was sort of intensified by the fact that where originally the Roman Catholics which Delftters became after the Protestant or Reform movement had the altar, there was a tomb made entirely of black marble, an *enormous* tomb of black marble and black banners hanging down and white marble skulls and things like that. It was as though death had taken the place of life, as though it was a sort of temple of death, that death was the deity there. That was what one actually felt, that these people were death-worshippers, that the Calvinists were death-worshippers and the worship of death was going on there. This was the actual feeling.

_____: Oppressing. [123]

S: It was almost horrific, one could say. Vajrakumara, who is quite sensitive to such things, couldn't even remain to look around. He just went. He felt quite ill. I felt a quite uncomfortable and unpleasant atmosphere, but I could tolerate it, Vajrayogini, being herself Dutch, didn't notice anything at all, [*Laughter*] which gave us food for thought.

Nick: Although presumably when cathedrals were built they were designed to raise the consciousness, not to squash it.

S: Presumably. Presumably there was some sort of effect like that when there was actually an altar there, and the Catholic services were going on. But I mean the Calvinists had there just this tomb, I think it was the tomb of William of Orange actually. Not the British William the Third, but the Prince of Orange, not King William.

Mike: William the Silent.

S: William the Silent, yes, that's right. [*Laughter*]

Mike: He was murdered too... [*2 or 3 words unclear*].

S: Yes.

Padmavajra: Why was he called William the Silent?

S: He kept his own counsel. *[Laughter]*

_____ : *(unclear)*

S: Yes, he was assassinated by the Catholics. About the only way they could get rid of him, and the scruple to do it.

Kovida: But there's no life in any churches. I mean the symbol of the crucifix is hardly a very *(unclear)* of life.

S: Yes indeed.

Kovida: Not an inspiring form, someone dead on a cross.

S: I had an idea in connection with what I'm going to write about Buddhism and blasphemy, that Buddhists should object to crucifixes outside churches where they can be seen by passing members of the public, that these are really offensive to Buddhists, yes, and that the Christians have got no right to offend the followers of other religions in that sort of way by exhibiting these really blasphemous objects, or one might even say obscene objects *[Laughter]* to the public gaze. If they want to deprave themselves in private *[Laughter]* we have nothing to say, but we do not see why these things should be inflicted on the general public. You've got one at the corner of the road in Bethnal Green. Every time you go to the tube and you pass by that Catholic church on the corner, you can't help seeing this wretched crucifix, so why *should* you be depressed [124] or upset by having a very life-like representation of someone being tortured to death? This is most unpleasant and the only reason why most people don't feel that way is that they've got hardened to it, which is a terrible thing. A very life-like representation of someone nailed to a wooden cross doesn't have any effect on them any more, so what does that suggest?

Priyananda: Alienation of some kind.

S: Alienation, it would suggest. Yes.

Mike: A really unhealthy relationship to the Catholic sacraments, and especially the Catholics' insistence that it actually is the body and blood of Christ that you are dealing with.

S: Yes, it is not a symbol. They are literally the flesh and blood.

Mike: In the Catholic countries like Austria, the hillside shrines where they'll have the crucifixes with the Christ on, they'll paint the blood in great detail.

S: Well, yes. The Spanish Catholics go in for this a lot, to have the wounds actually all sort of flowing with bright red paint. *[Laughter]* It's ghastly. I've not been to Spain but I've seen photographs, and you see a bit of this in Italy too, but I believe Spain carries off the honours in this particular way, and maybe it's no coincidence that in Spain you get bull-fights.

_____ : Goya.

S: Goya. They seem to love gore. Sorry about that! *[Laughter]*

_____ : He was goya-d by the bull!

Mark: Have you seen this poster, it's actually in Bethnal Green, it's outside the church and it says, 'God is dying to talk to you'? [*Laughter*]

Padmavajra: It's interesting. I remember when I was a kid, taking the sacraments, and the wafer had stamped on it the crucifixion, and they call it the bread of life. I think that's what they said.

S: Well, you can understand the symbolism in a general way, that you must die in order to live, etc., etc., well fair enough. But a literally represented crucifixion is surely offensive to a sensitive person. The Indians don't like this sort of thing. They react with some horror. Buddhists likewise in the East, they react with some horror to one of these realistic crucifixes or crucifixion scenes. They find it very offensive.

Padmavajra: Mind you, you do get posters like that, thangkas like that, with deities with skulls and tongues and things like that.

S: Well, but don't you feel any different? [125]

Padmavajra: Well, I do actually, I feel uplifted by it.

S: But also there is this difference, that the Vajrayana is so to speak an esoteric tradition and representations of that sort were supposed to be confined to the temples or maybe even someone's private chapels or certain times, say the time of initiation, but not exhibited in gory detail right out on the highway where anybody could see them, whether they wanted to or not. Why should you *have* to see such things?

Padmavajra: There's also the positivity in something like that, even though the sort of skulls and...

Kovida: Well, you don't know who he's standing on for a start, whereas the Christ figure... (*few unclear words*)... and he's supposed to be a human being.

S: Yes, and in a way it's meant to provoke feelings of guilt in you because they sometimes say, 'Well, look at Christ, how he's suffering and *who* has done this? *You* have done this. It's *your* sins that have crucified him'. So if a young impressionable child is told this sort of thing, he'll certainly feel quite bad about it, and quite guilty, and quite bad towards yourself.

Padmavajra: And Christ was really miserable. He really does look unhappy. He's not sort of going [*no words but allow the imagination to visualise the face*], sort of smiling about it, I mean he really is unhappy. He doesn't look as though he's doing it because he wants to do it.

S: Though I have read descriptions of Spanish crucifixes complete with blood where it is said - one description I remember - that Christ had his arms extended and his head sort of bent in a slightly foppish gesture [*Laughter*], almost as though he was flirting with you from the cross.

Mike: That really is what one is taught at Sunday school. I remember when I went to a whole series of them. It's really hammered home. It's used in fact, the crucifix image is used, in a mythological means of hammering home your guilt to you.

S: Yes. It's quite an unpleasant subject so maybe we'd better pass on to something more

Buddhist and more positive. Anyway, I shall be making my point that I mentioned in my little article when I get round to writing it.

Kovida: You should mention it should only be seen by consenting adults! *[Laughter]*

S: Yes, indeed.

Padmavajra: And Mrs Whitehouse. [126]

S: In private! *[Laughter]*

Mark: Amongst the Friends people quite enjoy knocking Christianity because it's something that they perhaps feel one can.

S: Yes indeed, because why do they enjoy it? Why do they enjoy it? What is the reason why they enjoy it? It's because in a way they've suffered from it. So it's in a way, a sort of retaliation but in a healthy way and liberating perhaps the energy which had been blocked by that Christian upbringing. Because in a way you need to ridicule what you were afraid of before in order to liberate yourself from it, so I think quite a bit of this sort of thing happens. Some people don't like it, they think it very negative, or it's disrespectful towards Christianity, that's also a religion, etc., but they overlook entirely the *psychological* aspect of the whole thing, that you need to *liberate* yourself from this sort of conditioning, and you can only do it - or perhaps I should say this is *one* of the ways in which you can do it. Just consider - supposing you happened to meet a Christian priest, a clergyman, could you really behave towards him in a direct way? Well I mean, maybe you might towards some pathetic clergyman, but suppose you met a bishop, you might find it quite difficult, you might, despite yourself be a bit impressed or think, oh, you ought to be a bit respectful or something like that, even though you don't actually accept or believe in anything that he stands for, but that conditioning would come into play again. Suppose you met the Pope - well, you might, even though you were a Buddhist, be quite overwhelmed by this sort of super father-figure, this wise old man as it were. This little old man of 80 in his little white cap, so fatherly looking, so kind. You might be quite overwhelmed by the experience. I mean members of the Church of England in the last century, clergymen, used to report being quite surprised - not anti-Roman as they said, and certainly not Roman Catholic but - when they found themselves in Rome and the Pope went by in his palanquin or sedan borne on the shoulders of his stout Swiss guardsmen, yes, they couldn't help falling on their knees and some of them got into trouble when they got back home, falling on their knees in front of the Pope, and they said they couldn't help it. *[Laughter]* But conditioning isn't easy to overcome, so you need, or at least some people need, to overcome it in ways of this sort, but I know some of our friends, or not so much in the Friends but outside, some Buddhists feel you must never knock Christianity, you must never criticise it, you must never speak against it, you should respect all religions. Well, that's true in principle, but what you're knocking isn't a religion in the sense that we understand the term - it's something quite perverted and quite negative so far as human growth is concerned. You're *right* to kick it out of the way. It deserves no respect whatever. As for the pompous old bishop, he deserves very unceremonious treatment; politeness as to another human being, sure, but then he won't let you treat him as another human being, he insists on being the bishop even with non-Christians very often. You mustn't let him get away with that if you happen to meet him. I met one or two Christian dignitaries in India - I remember their pompous, condescending, patronising sort of behaviour. It's *terrible* the way that they behave. They really do think that they're it, not only bishops but even people in lesser positions than that. So one mustn't let them get away with it if one can help it. Or such people as Bhagavan Rajneesh. *[Laughter]* I mean the way he calls himself *Bhagavan*, like Bhagavan Buddha, hoping people will make the connection, presumably. Yes? *[Laughter]* It's really disgusting, setting himself up there in that way. You have

to go through almost armed bodyguards to get to him, I believe they search you on the way in. [128]

Padmavajra: They smell you as well. You can't go in if you... (*unclear*)

S: Apparently he's got a big black car.

Mike: Mercedes.

S: Mercedes, and he goes around - so I've heard, I may be wrong - sort of giving his blessing out of a window like a pope, driving around Pune. [*Laughter*]

Padmavajra: Like the queen.

S: But it takes people in. People like it, people lap it up. They believe in it. But okay, it's all right as a group activity I suppose, relatively harmless, but it's got nothing to do with spiritual life or spiritual development whatever. But anyway that will be *your* little problem, not mine. [*Laughter*] I'm sure that there isn't room in Pune for you and him! [*Laughter*]

Lokamitra: He's moving out, actually.

S: Well, we've heard, the latest information is, that he's staying. I think he's just being obstinate.

Padmavajra: Is he?

S: Yes.

Mark: I heard that Pune city council put up a lot of money so that he could stay because...

S: Good for tourists.

Mark: ... he's such good business.

S: The prices of houses have gone up, it seems.

Anyway, let's carry on. Well, we've nearly finished. Then 'whether he stands, walks, sits or lies down, as long as he is awake, he should develop this mindfulness.' That's interesting isn't it? 'This mindfulness' - metta is clearly envisaged here as a form of mindfulness. 'This they say is the highest conduct here.' *Brahmam etam viharam idha-m-ahu* - 'Highest conduct' - that just won't do at all as a translation but we'll deal with that when we come to it. So, 'Whether he stands, walks, sits or lies down, as long as he is awake...'

Padmavajra: Does that mean in a way like not being asleep, physically asleep, like when you go to bed, or awake, aware?

S: Yes, it seems to mean that, but I don't see even why the practice of metta should be limited to that. One can go on experiencing, even practising, metta in one's sleep. But anyway leave that, what is the basic point that emerges here? 'Whether he stands, walks, sits or lies down, as long as he is awake, [129] he should develop this mindfulness', i.e. should practise metta, 'This they say is the highest conduct.'

Priyananda: Well, it's extending the practice out.

S: Yes.

Priyananda: Just out of formal meditation.

S: Exactly, yes. Metta is not just a meditation exercise, it's a way of life, you could say. It's something that you should be doing all the time: that you *will* be doing all the time if you really do wish to obtain the place of peace, or the abode of peace, or state of peace, state of calm.

Padmavajra: Is 'highest conduct', is that a translation of *brahma vihara*?

S: Yes.

Padmavajra: So you obtain the *brahma vihara* of metta when you're actually doing it all the time.

S: It does suggest that: that the *brahma vihara* in the full sense, the true sense, is the constant experience of metta in its most highly expanded form. [Pause] So *vihara* translated as conduct is really abode, state, experience. *Brahmam* which means high, noble, sublime, exalted, also expanded because, according to some authorities, the word *brahmam* comes from the root meaning to grow or expand, to swell. It's to be inspired. The *brahmin* for instance was originally the inspired sage - do you get the idea? - who sort of swells up with his inspiration and then bursts out with it. So *brahmam* is something which is great, something expanded. So in this way it came to mean almost the absolute. So one could say, 'Whether he stands, walks, sits or lies down, as long as he is awake he should develop this mindfulness, this recollection: this state, they say, this way of life, this experience is *brahmam*, highest' or the high, the sublime, the noble, the exalted, the expanded, almost the divine. [Pause]

Kovida: [mumbled words], he doesn't sound all that confident, does he? It's as if the person who wrote it isn't aware, or doesn't experience it.

S: It's as though he's representing tradition almost, rather than his own experience, one could say: that this is what the *wise* say. But perhaps one could say, there is no doubt about the experience, but it is - *brahmam* is what they say it is. You could look at it a bit differently, that it's not that the author, so to speak, has any doubt about the experience, but he isn't sort of completely identifying himself with the identification of this state of metta, with what is called *brahmam* or *brahma*. It could mean that also. It suggests a reservation about terminology perhaps, rather than any doubt about the experience. Also, even if you take it [130] otherwise, it doesn't necessarily imply any doubt that the fact that you say *idha-m-ahu* - thus they say - it's as though you are wanting to point out, or to emphasise, the fact that it isn't just your personal experience - it's the experience of a whole *series* of people who practise in this way. It's the experience of a whole *tradition*, not just yours. In other words you are in a way reinforcing your experience with an appeal to tradition, you could say that. There's nothing idiosyncratic about this. This is what the wise have *always* experienced. This is what they say. It's not just *me*, as it were, not just my *private* experience. [Pause]

Etam satim adhittheyya - it's not so much cultivate, it's more like exercise. Let him exercise this mindfulness. *Addhittheyya* which is a verb is connected with this *adhithana*, usually translated as blessing: *adhithana* being a Mahayana-cum-Vajrayana word. It's explained usually as, what shall I say? - it's more like the exercise of power, the exercise of influence, so to say that one should cultivate or exercise this *sati*, this metta, it suggests that it is something as it were powerful, an influence that you exercise, something that you radiate.

Padmavajra: So what word are we talking about?

S: *Adhittheyya*.

Padmavajra: Is this develop?

S: This is what Saddhatissa translates as cultivate, it isn't actually cultivate, it's more exercise.

Lokamitra: You mean develop. 'He should develop this mindfulness'.

S: Oh, have I got the wrong verse? Ah yes, develop. Not develop, it's exercise. Yes, before, what was it? - 'Cultivate a boundless heart'?

_____ : (*unclear*)

S: Which verse was that? Verse 7. Verse 7 - *bhavaye* - that is more like cultivate, to make become. That could well be translated cultivate or develop. But here it's a quite different word. It's *adhittheyya*, which means really to exercise, as when you speak of exercising power, exercising authority, exercising influence. As I've mentioned one could even say, 'let him radiate this mindfulness'. [131]

Padmavajra: So develop sounds as though he's still trying to bring it into being.

S: Yes, develop is too sort of individualistic almost. *Adhittheyya* - exercising as when you exercise power, exercise sovereignty. It has some sort of reference to other beings. Yes?

Padmavajra: It sounds also that you have it, you have the power, you have the metta.

S: Yes, you have it. You very definitely do have it, in this verse. That is the suggestion, the implication, it is not something you are in process of developing. You *have* it and you are exercising it. [*Pause*]

All right, then, the last verse. 'Not falling into error, virtuous and endowed with insight, he gives up attachment to sense desires. Of a truth he does not come again for repeated becoming.' This translation is not quite literal; it's not not falling into error, it's not falling into *views* - the implication is wrong views, false views, but there's also the suggestion that just *views* as views are undesirable. Even *right* views are to be given up eventually. So *ditthin ca anupagamma* - not falling into views *silava* - which means virtuous, moral. *Dassanena sampanno* - which is not so much endowed with insight, endowed with vision - *Dassana* is sight, vision. It's the same root as *drsti*, *ditthi*. If you wanted to distinguish the positive from the negative use of forms from words of this root, you could say views for the negative form and vision for the positive form. Say wrong views but perfect vision.

Padvamajra: How about giving up right views? It occurs to me that...

S: But how *do* you give up right views? What does giving up right views mean?

Padmavajra: That's what I'm beginning to wonder. I wonder if it's possible because you have to - presumably when you're a Buddha you - communicate the Dharma, therefore that means communicating right views.

S: No, it doesn't. The Buddha says so. The Buddha says that the Tathagata is free from views. He says that. He doesn't say he's free from wrong views, He says he's free from views. He has no views, no *ditthis*.

Priyananda: Otherwise it would be possible to define the state of Bodhi, and since it's indefinable by definition -

Kovida: But you only have a view if you don't understand something. [132]

S: Pardon?

Kovida: You only have a view of something if you don't understand it. I mean if you understand something, you don't have a view any more because you know.

S: You may use views for purposes of communication, and those views which work as it were can be called right views, but the Buddha himself has no views. He may make use even of teachings like, say, the *anatmavada*, but he doesn't adhere to the *anatmavada* as the absolute truth. It's just useful.

_____ : Yes.

Kularatna: Would you say that any form of view is a bias and a preconception?

S: Well, a view as such is any sort of conceptual formulation which you adhere to as having some kind of absolute value. This is what a view essentially is. So that the Buddha, for instance, uses words like 'self', 'person', but he doesn't have any *view* of self or *view* of person. He doesn't even have any *view* of Enlightenment.

So 'not falling into views' really means not absolutising, one could say, any conceptual construction, however useful it may be for purposes of communication. This is what 'not falling into views' means. And you notice if you start taking your conceptual constructions too literally and too sort of heavily, they cease being able to function as means of communication.

Padmavajra: Yes.

S: The *spirit* of the thing is important, the *feeling* that is put across: that is what gives *life* to the communication.

Padmavajra: You start laying them down and, well...

S: Well, if you start laying things down that obstructs communication, so you can't communicate anything then. I, for instance, myself, have encountered in the East people who lay down the *anatmavada* so heavily - that is to say the teaching that there is no self, no unchanging self and no soul, no individual being - that it amounts to a strong assertion of ego, which is an absolute contradiction in terms. Or you can go back to our friends, the Christians, they can talk about love in such a negative manner, they can almost hit you over the head with it and though they're talking about love, you can feel that their motivation isn't love at all, but they're *talking* about love a lot. [133]

So will they *communicate* love even though they're using the word? No. They've got a *view* of love, they've not got love. So we must have *anatta*, yes, but not necessarily a *view* of *anatta*. Have Buddhism, yes, but not a *view* of Buddhism. Many Buddhists in the East don't have

Buddhism, they have a *view* of Buddhism, which is a very different thing.

Padmavajra: So a view seems to suggest to me a kind of alienation from actual experience.

S: To the extent that it is only conceptual, it does mean that. That you're not using it, and that means if you're not using it really for purposes of communication, which would suggest that you're not in touch with yourself and with your own feelings and emotions.

Nick: Is what's said in this first sentence that a further step is to be taken after one is actually dwelling in the *brahma viharas*?

S: Mmm.

Nick: Rather than as practical advice all the time?

S: I think that the suggestion is that these are things one does all the time. This is, as it were, the summing up of this kind of person who practises in this way: what the result is as it were. He doesn't fall into error. He's virtuous, he's endowed with vision and he gives up attachment to sense desires. 'Of a truth he does not come again for repeated becoming'. This is not quite literal. For him indeed there is no rebecoming in any womb. He does not come to birth in any womb. That is more literal. He does not come to birth *again* in any womb. In other words he is not reborn. So it's as though the last verse gives you the result, the fruit, just as the first verse, the first half, gives you the sort of basis, the beginning, the introduction.

Padmavajra: So that puts quite a difference on it from the way Saddhatissa's translating it because he says that you don't have a rebirth, which means Nirvana, presumably, but saying you don't have a birth in any womb, that could mean that you're reborn as a god. It doesn't necessarily mean...

S: That's true, yes. Because rebirth from the womb is only one of the four modes of birth according to Buddhism. The gods are all born not by womb birth but by apparitional birth. They just appear as the result of previous karma, without going through the process of gestation.

Priyananda: Would this imply that you can be reborn but not...

S: But not as a human being or as an animal. If you take this expression very literally, not coming to birth again in [134] any womb. that does not exclude the possibility of rebirth in a higher heavenly world, even perhaps as an *anagami*.

Priyananda: A what?

S: An *anagami*, reborn in the Suddhavasas, the Pure Abodes, prior to attaining to Enlightenment.

Priyananda: Do you think it's OK to take that literally? I mean...

S: It's very difficult to say, because it depends on to what extent Buddhist terminology was, as it were, frozen, at the time when this sutta was compiled or written. It may in fact mean he is not born again ever anywhere. It could mean that. But if you insist on the literal interpretation of not coming to birth again in any *womb*, and if you point out there are these four modes of rebirth, not only one, but four modes of birth, then there is the possibility that the other *three* forms of birth are not excluded, but it's very difficult to say whether one should take that line or not.

Priyananda: I always took it as meaning that it was synonymous with Enlightenment, that one was no longer reborn.

S: That is true, but to say that one does not come again for rebirth in any *womb*, does not altogether exclude the possibility of rebirth, because there are other modes of rebirth, not *involving* any womb. There is, according to Buddhism, that is traditional Buddhist lore, there are four modes of birth which are possible - birth from a womb, birth from an egg, birth from moisture and apparitional birth. These are mentioned in the Diamond Sutra, for instance, and in many other places in Buddhist texts of all kinds. So if you say that someone is not reborn any more in a womb, all right, you exclude *one* kind of birth, but not the other three. They could still be born from an egg or from moisture; though it would be unlikely, perhaps - but what about the apparitional birth which is how the *gods* are born? So even after living and practising in this way, if you take this expression literally, there is still the possibility of your being reborn in the higher heavenly world as a god. Yes? So therefore if you take it literally, it isn't quite correct to translate as, 'do not come again for a repeated becoming', i.e. rebirth. But we do know that at the beginning certain words were used in a more general literary sense but later on they acquired a more highly specialised meaning; so whether this expression is used in a general, literary way or whether it does have that precise significance that it did acquire later on, we just can't say perhaps. We'd have to know exactly when this was compiled.

Padmavajra: Where is the *Karaniya Metta Sutta* from? Which...

Lokamitra: *Sutta Nipata*. [135]

S: *Sutta Nipata* and also the *Khuddaka Nikaya*.

Padmavajra: So it's been in an early collection of suttas.

S: One could say that - well, no, the *collection* is not necessarily early but it contains a lot of early material. It also contains some very *late* material so the collection must be *late*. One has to be really careful exactly what one says. [*Laughter*]

Mahamati: From what you were saying last week, could it be that this whole way of looking at the end of the cycle of rebirth, that maybe you were saying that the Bodhisattva's work is never done, which seems to me...

S: Yes, from the Mahayana point of view the kind of rebirth which is excluded is the compulsory rebirth as a result of past karma, but the Mahayana at least does not rule out the possibility of a voluntary rebirth out of compassion simply to help people, even though there is no rebirth due to you under the law of karma. So Mahayana Buddhism admits *that* possibility, which is probably not admitted by the Theravada.

Mahamati: But I even got the impression that maybe you were suggesting that the Bodhisattva ideal can't be distinguished from the arahant ideal, so that it's almost as though the Bodhisattva would inevitably almost choose to be reborn.

S: In a sense, yes. But it would be an inevitable *choice*, yes? Not something that inevitably happens to them. It would be something which followed naturally from compassion. Not that he had to undergo another rebirth in order to reap the consequences of previous actions, of a reactive nature.

Kovida: It's actually in keeping with the idea of continual expansion as well.

S: Yes, right.

Kovida: Because there's no sudden stop. You sort of continue.

S: Anyway, looking over the whole sutta, any sort of general question, or any particular point - now that we have actually got all the way through it?

Lokamitra: Do you know the context, or the supposed context?

S: I don't, I don't even know if there is one known. There may well be something mentioned in the commentary, but I don't have a copy. It probably wouldn't be very helpful as in the case of the commentary on the *Dhammapada*. It probably gives some stories which don't have much connection. *[Pause]* It's very complete in a way, isn't it? *[Pause]* [136]

Mahamati: Is there a poetic translation of this that one could say maybe in pujas?

S: There is one by me, Lokamitra has a copy of that. Does Woodward translate it poetically?

Kularatna: No, in prose.

S: Ah, but there is a verse translation, that is in blank verse. It's a little bit free but not too much so.

_____: There's another translation too, by Hare.

S: It would be by Hare, in *Woven Cadences*, Sutta Nipata.

_____: That's also prose.

S. No, I think it is, well, metred.

_____: *(unclear)*

S: He tends to use rather archaic English. But the original is in verse, quantitative verse, like Greek or Latin poetry. *[Pause]*

One could translate *adhiththeyya* not just as exercise this mindfulness, but extend the power of this mindfulness, something like that. This mindfulness of course meaning metta. Let him extend the power of this metta. *[Long pause]* Well, is that it?

Mike: I have a query.

S: Yes.

Mike: It does go back to verse 1, but it was when you went over the positive qualities of being able and straight, perfectly straight. In one sense, my heart sort of sank within me, that this is the *beginning* point, because it seems quite distant in many ways. Is one wrong in assuming that by practising the metta bhavana, one is likely, or more likely, to *get to* this starting point?

S: Well, it is a question of the path of regular steps and the path of irregular steps. If you go on the path of regular steps, this is what you have to do first. But if you go on the path of irregular

steps - and I have said that most people do; that seems almost unavoidable - you can as it were, maybe in a sense start on the metta, but then you'll find that you can't get all that far unless you strengthen the basis for the metta in the form of these [137] qualities. So you have to come back after a bit and strengthen them. They'll be strengthened to some extent and then you go forward again and do some metta, and then find you can't get any further with the metta so you come again and strengthen your base still more - and so on. But then there's another way of looking at it also. Sometimes we've said in connection with meditation that if you prepare yourself thoroughly, you are already practising. But if you have all those qualities of being capable, straight, perfectly straight, the chances are that your attitude towards others, your emotional attitude towards others, will be very healthy and positive, and amount almost to metta.

Lokamitra: I was quite surprised when I did this practice in Pune, on retreat. On the whole people are much more psychologically positive then here, but they found the metta bhavana practice difficult like people do here.

S: Yes. Well, maybe it's a sort of lower, coarser kind of positivity. To arrive at the more refined positivity which the metta certainly represents is not easy. It's definitely something almost *ethereal*, one could say. It's not just the warmth of good fellowship or the cheery camaraderie or anything like that. Or a sort of gregarious warmth. I don't want to refine it out of existence for practical purposes but do you see what I mean? *[Pause]*

All right then, let's end it there.

_____: Thank you.

S: I'm glad we completed it anyway, I was a bit afraid we might not be able to.

End of Seminar

*Originally transcribed by persons unknown in the late 1970s
Scanned into computer by Satyapala and assistants
Spell-checked from the scans by Shantavira
Checked against the original tapes by Silabhadra
Final read through and checking by Dhivati
Printing and distribution for Transcriptions by Silabhadra*

August 2002