

**THE PERFECTION OF CONTEMPLATION**  
**(Guide)**



**S:** The Upaniṣads are of course Hindu works [traditionally regarded as appendices of the Vedas] and the Epics are the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

P.68 For practical purposes, we may take Edgerton's definition of *Dhyāna*, 'meditation ... contemplation; mystic trance' or, quoting Levi, 'extase'.

**S:** None of these are very satisfactory. We just have to go further than that. 'Extase' is presumably the French equivalent of the English 'ecstasy' - Levi was a French writer - and *dhyāna* in a way is that, but the word has got all the wrong sort of connotations.

p.68 The ecstasies mentioned in Pali literature are usually four in number ....

**S:** I think it's quite misleading to call the four *jhānas* the four ecstasies, because ecstasy - if you are to use that word at all - corresponds to *prīti*, and that is just one *jhāna* factor. There are others. That particular *jhāna* factor isn't even present in all the *jhānas*. So to refer to the four *jhānas* as the four ecstasies is quite misleading and we should certainly not do that.

p.68 ... Edgerton draws our attention to a long ancient passage .. found with hardly a true variant, in both Pali and Sanskrit literature. In abbreviated form it is found in the *Dharmasaṃgraha*: 'The first is satisfaction and bliss, reflective, considerate, and born of discrimination. The second is satisfaction and bliss, caused by the escaping from personal exhilaration. The third is bliss, which has equanimity, mindfulness, and awareness. The fourth *Dhyāna* is the perception of neither bliss nor sorrow, because of having equanimity, mindfulness, and complete purity.'

**S:** These are the four superconscious states illustrated by those four similes of the soap powder and the water, the subterranean spring, the lotus flowers immersed in water, and the man who has wrapped himself in a pure white sheet after taking a bath. It's rather difficult to recognise them from this description, but that is in fact what is being talked about.

pp 68/69 The first *Dhyāna*, which follows intense meditation on the rational level, is marked as concentrated attention upon one subject.

**S:** That's not really quite right. It's a state of meditative absorption which arises when you are entering upon some higher level of experience, - something more blissful, peaceful, integrating, - but there is still a vestige of rational activity, particularly with regard to the object - or subject, that is - of your actual practice. This is something which I expect everybody has experienced anyway. Beginners, even, usually experience it without much difficulty. You are absorbed. [172] You're not just in your ordinary state of mind. You do feel a definite peace and purity pervading even the body. You are definitely more concentrated, in the sense of being more 'together'. Your energies seem to be flowing together more. You're more harmonious, more integrated. But the discursive activity of the mind is still continuing, at least intermittently. This is the first *dhyāna*.

p.69 The attention is detached (*vivekaja*, 'born of discrimination'), but fully aware of what is happening, and *vicāra*, 'going around and around the subject'. Satisfaction is felt that one is able to achieve this state, and bliss is the result.

**Vajradaka:** What's that?

**S:** *Vicāra*: ěgoing around and around the subjectí. That means, reflecting on it.

p.69                      The second *Dhyāna* discards both conscious attention (*vitarka*, it is usually called), and the constant examination (*vicāra*) of the object of oneís attention. This amounts to a renunciation or transcending of discursive reason.

**S:** This means that discursive mental activity (including mental activity in the ordinary sense with regard even to the method of practice itself) ceases. The remaining factors remain the same, but more intensified on account of the cessation of that kind of discursive mental activity. Again this is something which probably everybody has experienced a number of times. In the third *dhyāna* the more ecstatic type of experience calms down. Itís not so bubbly. Itís not so exhilarating. It becomes much calmer and steadier, though the actual joy not less, but youíre containing it more, containing it better. Itís not sort of splashing up or splashing over any more. Itís much more solid, itís much more serene, though still, of course, intensely joyful. And again the mindfulness and awareness are heightened.

Dr. Maticsí descriptions of the *dhyānas* are not all that satisfactory. Heís done his best as far as words and ideas go, but perhaps he hasnít actually practised meditation. The best way to think of the *dhyānas* is in terms of the four illustrations [of the ball of soap powder etc.]. They make them much clearer - or their nature or content much clearer - to someone who hasnít practised meditation than do the more analytical and psychological explanations. One gets from them a very definite impression of progressive harmonisation, integration of energy, heightening of awareness, elimination of activity of the discursive mind, and an intense joy which is a bit bubbly at first but gradually becomes more and more serene and harmonious as the mind becomes more and more full of equanimity.

p.69                      In addition there are four more advanced states ....

**S:** He says ěmore advancedí but this is not necessarily so from a purely spiritual [i.e. from the transcendental] point of view. The states in question are more like passages that open off from the fourth *dhyāna* rather than actual further stages beyond. In many passages in the Pali scriptures these additional four arenít mentioned: you go straight from the fourth *dhyāna* to Nirvāna. It seems the two sets [173] were put together [so as to form a continuous series] somewhat later. I therefore tend to regard the second set of four as dimensions of the fourth *dhyāna*, dimensions which you may or may not explore, just as you choose, rather than as literally higher stages which you have to pass through.

**Vajradaka:** Íve got a misunderstanding in my mind. When I was reading the *Survey*, in the section on meditation it said, or you said, that the point of wisdom was secondary concentration - not primary concentration but the second stage of concentration when one gets a subtle counterpart of the thing on which one is concentrating. In that case how is it that, as you have just said, you gain Enlightenment from the last of the four *dhyānas*?

**S:** These statements mustnít be taken too literally. What happens is that you soak yourself as it were in the four *dhyānas*. Having done that, and with your whole being under the influence of those four *dhyānas*, you allow that subtle mental activity with regard to the path to Nirvāna to arise. Technically youíve come back to the first *dhyāna*, or to a state just above it, but behind all that is the sort of saturated influence of those *dhyānas*. In a sense youíve come down; in a sense, though, youíve gone on. This is one method. The other method is simply to remain in the non-discursive, non-reasoning state indefinitely, or as long as you can, keeping yourself completely receptive, and then just ěwaití for the even higher, transcendental experience to come. But to encourage it, as it were, to stimulate it even, - to stir oneself up, - you can if you like - having gone through the *dhyānas* and having saturated your being in that type of higher experience - deliberately allow a subtle, completely ěobjectiveí mental activity to arise, i.e. a mental activity which is just what is necessary for that particular purpose [of

developing wisdom]. That's rather a different thing from engaging in ordinary discursive mental activity, and it's that which can spark off the insight and wisdom. According to some, I won't say schools of thought - it's more like trends of thought - you can develop *prajñā* or wisdom without ever going through the *dhyānas*, by sheer force of intellectual penetration, almost, backed up by a very strict and regular life. This is sometimes referred to as dry insight, that is, insight which has not been saturated in the moisture, as it were, of higher dhyanic experience. There's a great deal of discussion going on, even at present, as to whether a strictly *dhyāna*-less insight can arise. It seems to be felt, by some at least, that there must be a modicum of *dhyāna*, even if it lasts only an instant; but the difference really lies between that insight which arises without prolonged experience of the *dhyānas* and deliberately starts up 'objective' mental activity to orient oneself towards that still higher, transcendental - as distinct from purely dhyanic - dimension. The standard path, as it were, is very definitely to go through the *dhyānas* first, because though they are not transcendental, though they are just higher states of consciousness, they do modify the whole being very, very strongly indeed and make it much more open and receptive to the Transcendental. In fact in most cases, if that sort of preliminary work hasn't been done you may have a flash of insight but you won't be able to catch it. The being won't be able to take it over and absorb it and develop it into wisdom because it [i.e. the being] is too gross; but the *dhyāna* experiences refine the whole being so that insight is able to develop and one tries, in a sense, deliberately to spark it off by allowing the discursive mental activity to start up again. But when one does that [174] there's no distraction: it [i.e. the mental activity] is just purely what is necessary to form the conception, as it were, of Nirvāna, impermanence, lack of self, voidness, and so on. No more than that. And that serves as a support for the development of the insight or wisdom.

**Vajradaka:** Is it possible just to sort of jump stages ... for moments.... ?

**S:** Do you mean in general or just as regards meditation?

**Vajradaka:** As regards meditation.

**S:** Sort of. This raises, really, the whole question of 'jumping' in spiritual life when following the path, and no doubt what is true in that sense [i.e. in that context] is broadly true with regard to meditation practice. I've referred before to that Chinese classification of the three methods of progress, or modes of progress. There is progress by regular steps, as when, for instance, there are ten stages of the path and you go through them one by one. First you perfect stage 1, then you perfect stage 2, then you perfect stage 3, and so on. This is progress by regular steps. Then there's what they call progress by irregular steps. You start off happily tackling stage 3 and you get into stage 4. Then it occurs to you that you haven't done anything about stages 1 and 2, so you go back and do a bit of work on stages 1 and 2; but you get a bit tired of that: they may be a bit boring; so you think, 'Well, stage 4's more interesting,' and you work away again at that. In this way you might even get up to stage 5, but then you find you can't get any further, so you go back to stages 1, 2, 3, and that's the way it goes on. This is progress by irregular steps. The only point to be made here - though it is made not in this particular teaching, but elsewhere - is that though you can proceed in this way you cannot perfect a later stage before you have perfected the earlier stages. You can have some experience of it, but you can't perfect stage 5, say, until stages 4, 3, 2, 1 have been perfected. But you can have some experience of stage 5 even when stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 are quite shaky. One can apply this to meditation. Sometimes you may have - almost spontaneously - quite advanced experiences, but you can't sustain them or do very much with them because the experiences pertaining to earlier, lower, stages have not been thoroughly activated, have not been consolidated; so you have to go back. This is how progress can take place by way of irregular steps with regard to the *dhyānas* too. Of course there is a third method of progress, or mode of progress, and that is instant attainment, where there aren't any stages at all; but that depends on very special factors and obviously, since there are no stages one can't do anything about it. It either happens or it doesn't happen, so if it hasn't happened as yet, well, you just have to follow either the path of regular steps or the path of irregular steps. I don't know if I've mentioned this threefold classification before - if I have it was only in discussion, I think, not in a lecture - but it is a teaching of the Tendai School.

**Aśvajit:** Is this what is sometimes referred to as instant Enlightenment?

**S:** Presumably, yes.

**Mike:** You've mentioned earlier that you would like our own movement to be in many ways like the Tendai School. Is there any good literature that one could look into?

[175]

**S:** Not much. There are chapters in Yamakami Sogen's *The Systems of Buddhist Thought* and Takakusu's *Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, as well as in the third volume of Sir Charles Eliot's *Hinduism and Buddhism*. But the school was very synoptic in character, in fact all-embracing. In a sense it was just Chinese Buddhism and it was only later that the various schools - especially the Zen and Shin schools - became differentiated from the parent body and from one another. The outlook of the Tendai School was very comprehensive and has remained so down to the present day.

**Gotami:** In your lecture on meditation - I think it was the one in the Eightfold Path series - you divided meditation into three stages: *śamathā*, *samāpatti* and *samādhi*, and there *samāpatti* isn't what it says here. *Samāpatti* was described in terms of the various supernormal experiences that can arise in the course of the practice of meditation.

**S:** Yes, these are also called *samāpattis*.

**Gotami:** So there's two uses of this word?

**S:** Yes. *Samāpatti* is a term which is used both very broadly and also in a more restricted sense. If you go to the *Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment*, which has been translated by Charles Luk, you will find there many different permutations of *samādhi*, *śamathā* and *samāpatti* - so many, indeed, that it becomes almost scholastic. My hermit friend Mr. Chen used to go into this quite a lot. He was very interested in the subject, and I often discussed it with him. Let's go into it a bit now, because these terms are used. Sometimes you get the expression *śamathā* meditation. For instance, I saw on the notice board at the Centre an announcement for a little group which has been started somewhere and it says *śamathā* meditation. Now what do you all understand by this? There is this notice up in your own centre, and some of you are council members who are responsible for whatever is put up there. So, do you know in fact what is put up there - what that is all about?

**Vajradaka:** Yes.

**S:** Well, what is it?

**Vajradaka:** It's the mindfulness of breathing, basically.

**S:** Yes, that's the method, but what is *śamathā* meditation?

**Vajradaka:** Concentration.

**S:** In what sense?

**Vajradaka:** In the sense of the mind being fixed on an object, whatever the object may be.

**S:** Has anybody else got any views, or what did anyone else understand when they saw this?

**Dhruva:** Well, I thought *śamathā* meditation was the whole practice of quietening the body and everything mental, as opposed to *vipassanā* which I've understood as a bit higher than that.

**S:** Yes, there is some truth in that. Strictly speaking the basic, central meaning of *śamathā* is meditation practice pertaining to the four *dhyānas*. Any meditation practice which aims at no more than the achievement of the four *dhyānas* is a *śamathā*-type practice, i.e. one that does not aim, at least for the time being, at developing insight [176] or wisdom. Unfortunately in modern times the two types of meditation have become much too sharply differentiated, with the result that one has *śamathā* without *vipassanā* and *vipassanā* without *śamathā*, whereas really the *vipassanā* should grow quite naturally out of the *śamathā*. You even get *vipassanā* or 'insight meditation' teachers who don't bother about *śamathā* at all. They just give you what are, in fact, psychological exercises, and a lot of strain and tension develops, and they then tell you that you have developed insight into the truth of suffering! The classical Buddhist method - whether in the Theravāda or the Mahāyāna - is to have quite an extensive experience of *śamathā* and then gently go on to *vipassanā*. *Śamathā* meditation is what I call simply meditation. *Vipassanā* I usually now call contemplation. Or sometimes, if I use three terms, I say concentration for the preliminary stage, the stage of getting started, meditation for the middle stage when you are actually getting some dhyanic experience, and contemplation when insight starts to arise. What we teach in our meditation classes - our mindfulness of breathing and our *mettā bhāvanā* - is *śamathā* meditation. So if anyone asks you 'Do you practise *śamathā*?' that's the answer, 'Yes' - though it's not *śamathā* as sharply distinguished from *vipassanā*. Sometimes *vipassanā* may arise quite spontaneously without your knowing it in the sense of being able to describe it correctly in the traditional Buddhist terms.

**Aśvajit:** Could you say a bit more about the development of insight? I'm very hazy about it.

**S:** In terms of very basic Buddhism - which ought to extend right into the Mahāyāna - insight means the understanding of the unsatisfactoriness, impermanence and selfless (or un-ensouled) nature of conditioned existence. It means seeing through conditioned existence as it really is. Not just as a mental idea, but as an actual living experience. This is insight or *vipassanā*. For instance, if you see that everything is impermanent - if you really see that you are going to die - and if this is not just a little idea that means nothing to you but something that you really see, something that you feel and experience to such an extent that you cannot but act upon it, that is *vipassanā*. As I have already indicated, *vipassanā* has three major forms. When you see that everything mundane is unsatisfactory; that try as you might, you are never going to lead a completely satisfactory worldly life, - there's no happiness on that level, - when you really see this and are utterly convinced of it, and really behave in accordance with it, this is insight into *dukkha*. The same with impermanence and with regard to no separate self-nature - which is much more difficult and abstruse and leads on into the Mahāyāna *śūnyatā* or voidness. When insight is developed in any of these ways, there you are in the transcendental dimension.

**Mike:** Is insight sudden or gradual, or can it be both?

**S:** Well, it can dawn on you gradually, as it were. I think it depends on temperament. Or, you can have a sudden terrifying flash which may or may not be repeated but which is in any case quite a shattering sort of experience. It's like a flash of lightning on a dark night which shows everything, and then there's darkness again; but you've had that glimpse. That is insight as a sort of flash. *Prajñā* or wisdom is the same sort of thing, only it's daylight, as it were, and you just see steadily and clearly all the time, or most of the time. [177]

**Mike:** In my own experience, I wouldn't ever claim to have had specific moments of insight, but at the same time, my entire attitude towards living and life and what it is, has definitely altered over the last eighteen months in a very subtle way. I wonder if this is a kind of gradual process of insight?

**S:** In a way, yes. Insight can be very diluted and general, rather than concentrated in these short, sharp, powerful flashes. It depends partly on the method of practice as well as on the surroundings and so on - maybe even on karma. But if one practises much meditation, then there will be a definite subtle reorientation, which is not transcendental, but which

predisposes one to, and as it were softens the impact of, the insight. If your life is rather uneven, and sometimes you're rather spiritual and sometimes not at all spiritual, then the impact of whatever flash of insight you do get might be almost unpleasant, because there is a lot in your life which is completely discordant from that. However, if you are more meditative, if you're leading an ethical life, - practising right livelihood and observing the precepts, - and if you are filled with devotion, then when the insight hits you it's a softer impact and it's spread through the whole being, and absorbed easily. In a sense you don't notice it very much, but if you look at yourself you certainly see that changes have occurred. The insight was there, but it was present in this diluted, gentle sort of way, because that's the way in which you happen to be developing it. Other people might have a rather terrifying "Road to Damascus" type of experience which was quite catastrophic.

**Gisela:** I find it quite difficult to use these words or concepts because I have no experience of them and I sometimes wonder whether there's any point in using them at all.

**S:** Using them in what context?

**Gisela:** Well, like talking about it or reading about it because - but I suppose it works in that way. One gradually gets a feeling for it. You know, as I am now it's just a complete blank. I just don't understand it at all.

**S:** One has to wait until one's experience catches up and then you say, "Ah yes, that's what that doctrine is talking about!" or "Yes, that's what that illustration means!" When I first mentioned the illustration to the second *dhyāna* (the subterranean spring bubbling up inside the lake) I could see the little smiles appearing on the faces of several people. "Oh it's that!" they seemed to say. They recognised it and could link up their own experience with what the text said, what the scripture said. This is what happens. And it all becomes much more meaningful then. Your experience in a way becomes clearer, at least rationally speaking. You know a bit more definitely where you stand, and also, when you read the text it means much more to you, because you can now see it in the light of your own experience. I'm sure you've all experienced this to some extent.

**Aśvajit:** I've found great reluctance to go very deeply into these categories because, I think now, of a reluctance to find out where I really am, because I've been involved in it myself in such a competitive kind of education and so I'm not interested in that at all.

**S:** There's a saying of Oliver Cromwell to Cardinal de Retz, a saying that is quoted by Nietzsche, "A man never flies so high as when he doesn't know where he's going." There's a great deal of truth in [178] this from a Buddhist point of view, because your sense of direction, - when there's still somewhere further to go, - is determined by your lower mind, and if you abandon all that, well, you don't know where you're going, and then, of course, there is the possibility of going higher or further. In the same way, the instructions are all there these lists of stages and experiences - and it's quite useful to compare them sometimes with our own experiences, but I think we need not ever bother very much where we are, provided we know that we are going in the right direction and are doing what we have to do. But which milestone we've got to, if any, I think we need not bother very much, if at all. Whether you're in the second *bhūmi* or the third or the fourth - I won't say it doesn't matter, but it doesn't help to think about it particularly. Otherwise you become like the athlete who's always measuring his biceps, and weighing himself, and all that sort of thing. Your spiritual life becomes competitive, even if you haven't got other people in mind. It becomes ego-centred, ego-oriented. So press on. Make sure you make some progress every day, but don't bother too much exactly where you are. It sounds a bit paradoxical, but it is really like that. Sometimes, in a way, you may feel you've made good progress throughout the last year, but you couldn't say whether you're now at stage 3 rather than stage 2. It might even seem that, in some odd manner, you've slipped back to stage 1; but on the whole it might be clear that progress had been made. At least so your friends tell you, and they can't be wrong, I suppose.

Anyway, get very clearly in your minds what *śamathā* traditionally means, - what I have called the classical meaning of the term, - and also what *vipassanā* means. *Samāpatti*, as the text here says, is used sometimes for the four higher (formless) *dhyānas* plus a fifth even higher experience than that, and sometimes it is used to cover all the *dhyānas*, that is, the 4 or the 8 or the 9. I don't nowadays generally use that term. In fact in my last classes at the Centre I was simply using the English words and speaking in terms of concentration, meditation and contemplation - concentration and meditation covering *śamathā* and contemplation covering *vipassanā* (insight) and *prajñā* (wisdom). Probably that is the most straightforward usage. If we can avoid using Sanskrit and Pali words it is better, and I think we can here. But if later on we ever are asked by someone who has gone a bit more into things, and who is familiar with the Buddhist texts, "Where does *śamathā* come in? What does it correspond to in your system of teaching?" then you can say, "That is what we mean when we talk about concentration and meditation, and when we talk about contemplation that refers to *vipassanā* and to *prajñā*". *Samādhi*, which is another term, is ambiguous. Sometimes *samādhi* means concentration and meditation, sometimes it means wisdom in a definitely Mahāyānistic sense. I've gone into this in one of the talks in "The Essence of Zen", where I've spoken of Mahāyāna *Samādhi* as Enlightenment in its "subjective" aspect of personal realisation ...

**Mary:** Does it mean that *samādhi* in that particular passage meant *prajñā*?

**S:** The hyphenated *Samādhi-prajñā* meant a unified experience of *samādhi* and *prajñā* which went beyond *samādhi* and *prajñā* as separate things. It was *SAMĀDHI-PRAJÑĀ*. In the first edition of this little book there was a dash instead of a hyphen between the two words, which meant that the meaning didn't come out so clearly, though a very careful [179] reader would have seen that, judging by context, the dash was a hyphen, or should have been a hyphen. If people are doing any teaching, especially teaching of meditation, they should be quite clear about these terms - or at least as clear as they can be in view of the nature of the subject, and in view of the fact that they are not used in Buddhist literature itself, or in modern Buddhist practice, at all consistently. The principal terms used in connection with meditation are *dhyāna* or *jhāna*, *śamathā*, *vipāśyanā* or *vipassanā*, and *samādhi*. These are the main terms. When it occurs in the triad of *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*, *samādhi* means concentration and meditation, but in other contexts, of course, it sometimes includes *prajñā*. Another term that is used in connection with meditation is *bhāvanā*. The texts speak of *śamathā-bhāvanā* and *vipassanā-bhāvanā*. *Bhāvanā* means development or cultivation or, more literally, "making to become". Thus *śamathā-bhāvanā* means development or cultivation of calm, *vipassanā-bhāvanā* the development or cultivation of insight. Sometimes in Buddhist countries they use the word *bhāvanā* to mean just meditation in the very general sense. It is a "bringing into existence" of higher states of consciousness, i.e. the *dhyānas*, and possibly, of *vipassanā* or insight.

p.70 ... having been thoroughly warned of the danger and the signs of self hypnosis ...

**S:** I wonder about this. No one ever warned me about the danger of self-hypnosis. It does not seem to occur in the East and no one else seems to fall into this as far as I know. What is self-hypnosis? Writers on Buddhism are very often rather worried about this. I wonder why it is. We take it for granted that the monk at least is lucid at all times, even if the unfortunate layman can't be. But self-hypnosis? Is this something which is possible? Does it ever actually happen, and what is it?

**Gotami:** Yes. One of the Friends has experienced this. She was used as an experimental patient by someone who was teaching hypnosis and she decided to see if she could do it for herself, and, in fact, she did that, and she said that she remained lucid all the time.

**S:** Then it wasn't self-hypnosis, or hypnosis of any kind, if she was lucid.

**Gotami:** But she said that when you are hypnotised you are lucid all the time too.

**S:** Then what is this state of hypnosis in which you are not lucid and against which, apparently, one has to be warned?

**Vajradaka:** (To Mike) It would seem to correspond with the story that you were told about those people in the United States.

**Mike:** Oh yes, shall I tell you about this?

**S:** Yes, do.

**Mike:** A certain Buddhist friend of ours was in America last summer and he was conducting classes - Zen classes, I think - every morning between 5 and 9. A group of people had apparently asked him to do this. One day one of the girls who was attending asked him if he would like to come along to another meeting that evening. It was a similar kind of thing, she said. When he got there, however, he discovered it was a black magic rite in which they were going to get involved. So he [180] said, "Look, I don't really feel I can take part in this, but if nobody has any objections I don't mind sitting and just being a spectator." The other members of the group were a bit unsure about this, but after discussing it for a while they agreed to let him sit in and watch. They then went into a sort of phallic worship with a *papier mâché* phallus, an enormous thing, and I think the whole ritual was performed in a state of nudity. After an hour or so the pitch of the thing intensified and the leader of the group, who had originally brought the *papier mâché* phallus into the ritual and who had been wearing it, took it off to reveal this enormous penis of his own. The whole ritual was then repeated, but this time for real, and it involved a great deal of sucking and massage and general worship of the penis. Strange to relate, the girl who was the most taken up with the entire thing was this girl who had been coming to his sittings in the morning.

**S:** But where does the hypnosis come in?

**Mike:** Well, at the end of all this, the girl came up to our friend and asked him if he would like to go for a cup of coffee. Over the coffee she said, "Well, what did you think of all that?" He said, "I can't quite make it out. How do you relate what you are doing with me for four hours in the morning to all this sucking-off that you've just been doing?" She replied, "Oh, but it was only symbolic. It was only a *papier mâché* ritual implement." Our friend was astonished. "No, no!" he exclaimed, "You actually were sucking that guy's penis!" The girl objected to this quite strongly. "No of course I wasn't," she insisted. "You're quite mistaken." She genuinely believed, afterwards, that it had only been a ritual using a *papier mâché* ritual implement. She was completely unaware of the fact that she'd been actually sucking this guy off.

**S:** I wouldn't say that there was any question of hypnosis here. I would say it is a quite ordinary case of a woman, one half of whose mind refused to let the other half know what she was doing. There are several well-known literary examples of this in Henry Miller's writings, for instance in *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn*. Some people just have a great capacity for deceiving themselves. In this particular case, there was another side of the girl's mind or being or psyche that she just wasn't able to recognise or accept, and which she was quite able to shut off. I don't think there's any question of hypnosis involved here at all.

**Mike:** It's interesting that when our friend described her actual behaviour at the ritual to her this girl also said, "My boyfriend's asked me to do that and I won't do it."

**S:** Well, that gives the game away, doesn't it? [Laughter] Just read Henry Miller. It's very clear what is happening. It's simply that an ordinary decent girl just won't recognise - or at least her ordinary decent mind won't recognise - that she's got this other side. She's able to separate it off completely and sort of pretend to herself - almost - that she hasn't done certain things that she has, in fact, done. This happens all the time in small ways.

**Mike:** But is this an actual pretence?

**S:** She's not consciously pretending, though at the same time she isn't completely unaware of what she's doing. This is not an unusual thing at all, but I would say that it is not a question of hypnosis. She'd not been hypnotised. Of course, if the whole thing was exposed [181] in the newspapers, or if the police came along and she was arrested, she'd be quite capable of putting in a plea through her lawyer that she was hypnotised by the leader of the group and didn't know what she was doing and wasn't responsible - and could believe it, even, at least with half of her mind.

**Gisela:** But we can. I mean, one can pretend some things. When you start off you know that you are pretending, but after a while you don't know it any more. I mean, it can happen. Maybe not to such an extreme, but ...

**S:** Henry Miller gives some very extreme examples indeed. I think in this particular aspect of life, the sexual, the sort of thing that this friend of ours was describing can happen quite easily and does happen, in fact, quite a lot. Certain things go on and people act and pretend afterwards as though it all just never happened, and keep up that pretence. This is quite ordinary. But hypnosis? I'm still wondering where this kind of warning against the dangers of self-hypnosis really comes from. What is it, in fact, that people are warning you against when they say, 'Don't practise meditation or you'll hypnotise yourself. You'll get into a hypnotic state?' Does that in fact happen?

**Aśvajit:** I've had no experience of it and have never been confronted with anyone who has succumbed to it.

**Vajradaka:** Perhaps it could be mistaken for catatonia?

**S:** Well, that's a very extreme sort of thing. It occurs to me that if the warning against the danger of self-hypnosis has any sort of validity at all - and usually it hasn't, being the outcome of a sort of irrational fear - then this is based upon, I think, two possibilities. One is that as a result of practising meditation, - possibly practising wrongly, - and in the case of a person with a certain kind of psychic structure, alienation may occur. This can happen if, in the course of the meditation, something comes up which the person just can't accept, with the result that they cut off and shut off from it rather sharply. When this happens they can get into a sort of alienated state and can seem very distant and 'away', as it were. That could perhaps be looked on as a kind of hypnotic state, or state of self-hypnosis, because they would give a strong impression of being estranged, and not in touch, and away from themselves. The other possibility is with regard to the kind of person whose psychic contents are scattered and unintegrated and whose 'ego' is not properly formed. They could practise meditation and relapse into a sort of pre-ego state, and that would appear very much as though they were under hypnosis. I've seen one or two examples of this with young children. That's why I'm not at all happy about allowing very young children to try to meditate: because this could happen. You might even have heard me discouraging parents who wanted their children to take up meditation, saying, 'Just let them sit with you when you meditate and do a little bit, but don't think in terms of definite sessions, or of getting them definitely practising meditation.' I'm thinking of children under 7 or 8. These are the only two possibilities that I can think of that people might be referring to when they warn against the danger of self-hypnosis.

When I arrived on the scene in 1964 there were constant dire warnings being given at the London Buddhist Society against the danger of practising meditation, and they allowed only me to take classes [182] there - apart from Mr. Humphreys' Zen class. I remember Mr. Humphreys himself telling me, 'Oh I never encourage people to meditate longer than five minutes. That's the most that they can stand.' Now the Society has its own meditation classes, I believe, and presumably people meditate much longer, which they weren't allowed to do before. Though there was quite a lot of talk in those days about meditation being dangerous, and how you could easily go off your head if you meditated too much (i.e. more than five minutes a day), it seemed to be mainly Mr. Humphreys' personal scare. At any rate, warnings appeared in *The Middle Way* and a bit of controversy developed. The whole thing might have

arisen because of a rather extreme form of *ëvipassanāí* meditation that was fashionable at that time. At least 11 or 12 people who had practised it turned up at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihāra after my arrival, and I found they were very badly affected mentally. Three more people were in mental hospitals. The latter must have been in a pretty bad state even before encountering *ëvipassanāí* meditation and should never have been put on to that sort of practice in the first place. All this had created quite an atmosphere in Buddhist circles in London in 1964 and 1965 and the Buddhist Society tended to discourage meditation quite strongly. Meditation was *ëdangerousí* - a word that one often heard. Things are a bit different now, I believe, and I think this is due, directly or indirectly, to us: to the *ëFriendsí* and, maybe more, to me personally.

**Gotami:** What are the dangers of meditation?

**S:** Really, none at all. The only dangers are wrong kinds of practice. I don't think there are really even any wrong methods. The main danger, or the main difficulty, is just trying to do too much too soon and thinking of meditation as a sort of achievement, as something that, if you work at it, you must automatically get such and such a result from. This egoistic, grasping sort of attitude is, I think, the greatest danger, because it builds up tension, but I don't really see any serious danger apart from that - except in the case of a person who is what they describe as schizoid, whose latent schizophrenia could, perhaps, come out as a result of practising meditation. But I'm not even quite sure what *ëschizophreniaí* is, or how it arises, or how we ought to deal with it through meditation or in any other way. I must say that, in the whole time I've been taking meditation classes, I never knew anybody who was ever the worse for practising meditation, even in the case of those who overdid it a bit. But I certainly know there were a few, especially in the earlier days, - people with rather rigid personality structures, and somewhat emotionally repressed, - who tried to do more and more hours of forcible concentration and just landed up with severe headaches. But that's the kind of attitude I was referring to: straining, and making an egoistic sort of effort. Otherwise, I don't see any danger except, perhaps, if you have a prolonged experience of meditation on retreat and then let yourself go back into the hurly-burly too quickly. That can have a rather unpleasant effect, even quite a bad effect, but it isn't the meditation itself that is responsible, it's your own lack of caution in making the transition to a different kind of life. Really there are no dangers in meditation at all.

**Aśvajit:** Would those remarks apply also to the cautions that are sometimes directed to so-called Tantric meditation? Even the Dalai Lama in his speech said that unless one does these things under the right circumstances, with full facilities, then it can be dangerous.[183]

**S:** I wouldn't agree with that as a blanket statement. To the best of my knowledge, the only actually dangerous practice - and it does occur in some branches of the Tantra - is breath control, or *prānāyāma* in the strict sense. There, certainly, one needs a teacher and one needs the right sort of environment. Apart from that I don't think there is anything that is actually dangerous, though there are many things that you could do wrongly and then not get any particular results from. The only danger there is lies in a sort of general misunderstanding of the Tantra in such a way that it's detrimental to your whole spiritual life, as when people think of Tantra in terms of sex, so that getting into the Tantra means getting into a more and more active and variegated sexual life and dignifying that with the name of Tantra because, apparently, you need some sort of excuse to whitewash the whole thing, at least in your own mind. There is that danger, but then that's just part of the general danger of slipping back. There's no specific danger in the form of madness or anything like that. I think *prānāyāma* is the only really dangerous thing, i.e. *prānāyāma* wrongly practised, without a teacher. That Tantric exhibition in London created several misleading impressions, though it was a very good exhibition, because they just included, as Tantric, anything that was remotely erotic, whether it was an illustration of the Kama Sūtras or Moghul pornography: if there was anything of sex in it, it was automatically Tantric; which is very misleading. There are four great divisions of the Tantra, and three of them don't even make use of sexual symbolism, what to speak of sexual practices. Only one out of the four does, which is the Anuttara. So I'm still a bit puzzled as to why all these warnings against the danger of self-hypnosis ... *ëOh*

be careful, if you meditate. You might end up in a hypnotic state. What is this hypnotic state? Is it so undesirable? And are you so likely to fall into it when you start meditating?

**Gotami:** Even in hypnosis you're not likely to suggest to yourself anything that you're not normally going to do anyway.

**S:** We might even have to consider the perhaps extraordinary suggestion that the hypnotic state is in fact a quite healthy thing, and somewhat analogous to the meditation state in its early stages. After all, what is hypnosis? It's a sort of sleep, a state of lucid sleep.

**Aśvajit:** Or a non-reactive state, perhaps?

**S:** Yes, and so not unlike meditation in its early stages in some ways.

**Gisela:** It was used as a kind of positive state originally by Freud, wasn't it?

**S:** Yes, it was. Maybe we're approaching it the wrong way round. It may be simply that hypnosis itself, or the hypnotic state, has got a bad name. I rather suspect it was given a bad name 150 or so years ago by the Church and other such authorities on account of the fact that the people who got into hypnosis and mesmerism were not very orthodoxly religious people and were suspected of being in league with the Devil, etc. But they might have just got into something a bit like a meditative state. Who knows?

**Aśvajit:** Perhaps achieved a degree of clarity and understanding of the real situation, that it made others feel uncomfortable. [184]

**S:** Yes, because "hypnosis" is a dirty word, in a way, isn't it?

**Aśvajit:** Implying power of one person over another.

**S:** Yes, though it seems really never to happen like that. Some people are very suggestible - but you find that in ordinary life with nothing of hypnotism coming in.

**Gotami:** I think perhaps the fear comes from the fact that it's usually done by somebody else, on you, and that having once been hypnotised by that person it's very easy for you to be put under hypnosis by him again. Someone that I know and who used to take a group for hypnosis said that there were some people in the group that he had hypnotised who, after a few sessions, even if they were only in just an ordinary social setting, if he did certain things, associated with the technique, would become hypnotised quite easily. So perhaps people are afraid of coming under the control of another person in this way.

**S:** I don't believe this, though on the surface, as it were, it may well be true. My guess is that, in that sort of situation, someone who is very easily hypnotised by a particular person, or very easily brought under his or her power, wants to be hypnotised, wants to be under their power, and this is just a way of achieving that end.

**Gisela:** I would say that that fear is much broader. It's just the fear of not being in what we would call "normal" states of consciousness. That's what I'd say all this reflects - a clinging to what we call "normal". Anything that's not a normal state of consciousness we're just frightened of.

**S:** Yes. And the so-called hypnotic state of being mesmerised, may well be actually a quite positive, healthy and normal thing.

**Gisela:** Well, psychoanalysis has used it as such - Freud did to start off with - to achieve a cure of certain neurotic symptoms.

**Vajradaka:** One of the criticisms that I've heard against hypnotism is that it makes a time lag between the body and the mind, because for the time that one is hypnotised one is away from the body and out of contact with it, so then, when one comes in contact with the body again, they are not in synchronicity, and that when one is crossing the road, for example, one's mind and one's body can be separated by as much as five minutes and of course that can be very dangerous.

**Subhuti:** Doesn't sleep do the same thing?

**S:** (To *Vajradaka*) I'm not quite sure about that, whether such a time lag does actually happen.

**Vajradaka:** The person that told me this said that it happened over a long period of time, with hypnosis, and it sort of built up.

**S:** I wonder if this has been actually verified. It seems a bit odd, because it could apply to the sleep state, and to meditation too. Meditation does, of course, slow down your reactivity, that's true, and that makes life a little awkward sometimes, because one's conventional life, and one's relationships with other people, are just sustained by reactivity so that, when the reactivity collapses, it's as though there's nothing left, and you're in a rather odd and uncomfortable state, sometimes, until your true spontaneity builds up a bit and starts functioning. The kind of 'time lag' you mention might amount to no more than that. You certainly wouldn't be well advised to start crossing a busy [185] road just after meditating, when your mind is rather quiet and you don't find it easy to react quickly. There may be an element of truth in what you heard in the sense that eventually, if you are saturated with meditation, - or even with a little hypnosis, - you must refuse to function in the old way. You say, 'My mind is not going to catch up' with my body. It's just an old reactive body anyway. The body's got to change, my life's got to change, - the whole pattern's got to change, - according to my new state of mind.

**Aśvajit:** It's quite possible to cross the road without reacting, actually, although that is quite difficult. [*Laughter*]

**S:** On my last visit to London I stood on the Archway Road waiting to cross and it was quite a horrific experience, after being away in Cornwall so long. I crossed successfully, but I didn't enjoy it.

**Dhruva:** This is one of the things you can see in London, the difference between those who are experienced in road-crossing and those who aren't. Actually, it's quite easy just to slide in and out of the traffic. You can go at the same speed, and you're not reacting violently to anything, just joining the flow.

**Aśvajit:** But there are so many currents going on, cross-currents in fact. That's the difficult thing.

**S:** Some time ago, when I was going around London with Mark, he commented one day that I never looked both ways before crossing the road. I said, 'I know; I don't need to: I'm a Londoner.' [*Laughter*] It isn't really necessary to look both ways. You can see things out of the corner of your eye, as it were, and you just cross straight over.

Anyway, all this talk about the danger of self-hypnosis sounds quite reasonable, but I just don't think there's anything in it at all, really. The only danger that may arise in connection with meditation is of someone getting a bit alienated when, in the course of their practice, emotions start coming up which they find frightening, and, therefore, difficult to accept. Even this is not a danger in the long run, because sooner or later it will be dealt with. It is more the symptom of changes taking place than anything actually dangerous, and, as I said, it can be dealt with.

The first *Samāpatti* (and fifth *Dhyāna*) is a consciousness of the infinity of space. The second is a consciousness of the infinity of consciousness itself. The third is realisation of the total unreality of all things; that there is nothing at all. The fourth is consciousness of unreality as an object of contemplation; that is to say, it is the *Dhyāna* of neither nothing nor something. The last *Samāpatti* - the summit of consciousness - is the cessation of all conscious perception.

**S:** Let's discuss these briefly, whether usefully or not so usefully. Consciousness of the infinity of space. This is not just a looking and seeing infinite space. It's also a feeling of not being obstructed - a feeling, as it were, of freedom and expansion. Space is the condition for things existing in space, and it's because things exist in space that you can be obstructed in your own expansive movements. This experience of the infinity of space is not simply a visual experience [186] with you here but looking out over the infinity of space. It's an experience of one's whole being sort of expanding indefinitely, just as though you were in infinite empty space and your body, let us suppose, swelled up like a balloon and it went on expanding and expanding, - the balloon getting bigger and bigger, - and there was nothing to obstruct it at all and it went on expanding to infinity. If this was to happen you'd get a definite feeling, a definite sensation, and this is the sort of thing that the expression 'consciousness of the infinity of space' is getting at. It's not just a visual experience of looking out into infinite space from a certain point in space.

**Aśvajit:** Is it perhaps, also, when you think of a point out there and suddenly realise that you are out there?

**S:** Right, or again, it's a bit like a bird which can fly anywhere in the sky: it can go in any direction whatsoever. It's a bit like that, too - except, of course, that when the bird is in one particular point in space it isn't in another. But here it's not like that. So this is the infinity of space. It's an experience of the unrestrictedness of mind, of being even, and/or consciousness.

Next, of course, is the consciousness of the infinity of consciousness itself. You are aware of this. You are aware of this unrestrictedness - of the fact that you are unrestricted, that there is no limit to your expansion in any particular direction.

The third *Samāpatti* (and seventh *Dhyāna*) is the realisation of the total unreality of all things; that there is nothing at all. No, it's not quite like that. Not that the words are incorrect, but if you are expanding infinitely, and can be in this place as easily as in that, then what's the difference between one part of space and another, one place and another? There's no thing in particular, no question of this place and that place: there's nothing at all. In a sense it's all the same, though not the same one particular thing. The third *Samāpatti* is more like that.

With the fourth *Samāpatti* (and eighth *Dhyāna*) one's experience becomes rather rarefied, so that we need not linger over it. It is the *Dhyāna* of neither something nor nothing. Here the subject-object relation is wholly transcended.

The fifth and last *Samāpatti* is the cessation of all conscious perception. Not that you go into a dead state, though it often has been understood as such by scholarly writers on Buddhism. Rather, it's as though even the subtle potentiality of subject-object relation is transcended. In *Yogācāra* terms, you've reached the *Ālaya*, which is a pre-subject state altogether.



**S:** *ĕkāgrā* means one-pointedness. But *ĕ*concentrated on one thought? It's not really that, or rather, it is that, but one must be careful not to misunderstand. It's not a forcible fixation of attention. It's a natural flowing of all the energies towards a single point. It's an overall orientation of the whole being, therefore a state of integration and harmonisation of psychic energy, - this is what it essentially is, - and you feel that process beginning when you get into the practice of meditation. You feel the energies all coming together. You feel that they are not divided any more - not fighting among themselves. They're all made harmonious. This is *samādhi*.

p.71                    It is the receptive state of intuition, rather than the active state of thinking. (Suzuki)

**S:** *ĕ*Receptive state, *ĕ* intuition, etc. These terms are all right, but they don't really convey very much. They are not nearly powerful enough.

p.71                    It is the in-between state - between reason and intuition ...

**S:** This is not incorrect, but again it's much too weak and feeble. The words are OK, but they wouldn't convey very much to someone who didn't have actual experience of meditation.

p.71                    Sometimes the Nine *Samāpattis* are interchangeably called the Nine *Samādhis*, and above and beyond the traditional list of nine, many, many other *samādhis* are mentioned.

**S:** This brings us back a little to my usage of the word *samāpatti* in the lecture that Gotami referred to. It's as though, when one gets away from the ordinary rational mind and into these higher states, but still short of *prajñā* or wisdom, there are all sorts of *ĕ*dimensions of consciousness. Some of these are reflected in the four *dhyānas*, which seem to be the more standard pattern for these experiences, and the one more directly linking up, later on, with wisdom. Others are reflected in the five *samāpattis*, as well as in various later lists. All represent these very very rich and varied dimensions of higher consciousness. Perhaps we touch upon the fringes of some of them in the course of *ĕ*psychedelic experience and so on. There's a whole vast range of experience here that, in all probability, has never been fully and systematically explored by any one person, though different people might have explored different sections.

**Mike:** Can insight arise in any of these?

**S:** It can arise after an experience of any of them. When the insight arises there is, in a sense, a subtle mental activity which as such is incompatible with the *dhyāna* experience. In a sense the insight can come without that activity - but then you wouldn't know it. You would have nothing to grasp it by, as it were. But Enlightenment - or [189] a *satori* experience, to use the convenient Japanese term - can also occur in sleep. It doesn't even have to be in the waking state.

**Mike:** Does the Bodhichitta arise as the result of insight or is it of the nature of insight?

**S:** Ah, you've got into quite a different track now! The term Bodhichitta is part of a different set of categories, and occurs within what is, in a sense, a different context. All the same, one could say that the Bodhichitta is, quite definitely, of the nature of insight and wisdom, though in the more Mahāyānistic sense of these terms. It isn't just of the nature of a *samādhi* experience, or a *satori* experience: it goes far beyond that. It is definitely of the nature of an insight, however germinal. In a sense it's more than an insight - it embraces the whole of one's nature. It's more *ĕ*volutional, whereas insight is more cognitive, at least as a term.

**Mike:** So that insight is just a sort of fragmentary aspect of the process of Enlightenment?

**S:** Yes, one could say that. Generally, the word insight is used more for the preliminary flashes. When those flashes consolidate, they become wisdom, and beyond that the Mahāyāna has Great Wisdom, which is the understanding of the Void in the profounder sense. But the Bodhichitta in a way is the initial, first experience of wisdom and compassion as one, not two. It's the germ of that experience, or the germ of what culminates in that experience. Insight is, in a way, one-sided.

**Mike:** It's just operating very much on the wisdom side.

**S:** Yes.

**Mike:** I did wonder, though, if there is, in fact, an emotional equivalent to insight.

**S:** There is faith, in the later sense. In some forms of early Buddhism, for example in the Theravāda, faith is something very subordinate and inferior, but as Conze points out, and as I think I have mentioned in the *Survey*, later on faith becomes co-ordinate with wisdom, especially in the devotional schools of China and Japan. But the Bodhichitta is the point at which wisdom and compassion start coming together. They may both be very germinal indeed, but they've at least come together, and to the extent that they've come together it's the Bodhichitta. However rudimentary and undeveloped it may be, it's there.

**Mike:** I find relating the whole idea of insight to my meditational experience very difficult, but on the other hand, I've had a number of - for me at least - quite profound emotional experiences.

**S:** The Theravāda - indeed the Hīnayāna generally - does tend, at least theoretically, to underrate faith. Yet there are passages in the Pali scriptures - usually explained away by latter-day Theravādins - which quite clearly speak of liberation by faith. Such-and-such a person, we are told, was liberated, gained Nirvāna, through faith. If one accepts that quite literally, then faith clearly is an emotional equivalent of wisdom. One could therefore even say that, for some people, what arises is not penetrating insight but an overwhelming emotional experience of faith and devotion which is equivalent to insight.

**Mike:** How does this relate to the teaching of the Five Spiritual Faculties and the necessity of balancing faith and wisdom - one's intellectual capacity with one's emotional? [190]

**S:** This is a structure that applies more on the ordinary psychological level, and with regard to the spiritual life as a whole. But the point at which you contact ultimate reality, or Nirvāna, cannot be referred to either as a thought or a feeling, etc., but it can be spoken of analogically as any. It isn't a thought, but you can speak of it in terms of insight as though it was a thought, because you've got no other language; but its content is not thought-like really. In the same way you can speak of it as an emotional experience, in terms of faith and devotion, but actually it's not faith and devotion in the ordinary psychological sense: the content is transcendental. Again, you've just got to find some words. Do you see what I mean? You can even speak of it in volitional terms, but that is rare. Usually it's spoken of either in intellectual terms or in emotional terms. So insight is not really just intellectual as opposed to emotional. Real devotion is not just emotional as opposed to intellectual. And real insight or real understanding, real wisdom and real faith and devotion, tend to coincide. You find this in the devotional schools, where their faith ends up by being something very much like wisdom, and in content, I'm sure, the same as real wisdom. It's just a question of either a predominantly cognitive or a predominantly emotional mode of expression - or even of experience; but the one is as valid as the other. Early Buddhism, in its mode of expression, is predominantly cognitive, in fact very much so, and the emotional mode of expression developed only later.

**S:** This includes all the so-called supernormal faculties: e.s.p. phenomena and everything of that kind, clairaudience, clairvoyance, acting upon things at a distance, thought reading and so on. But traditionally, in Buddhism, they are not regarded as very important, except in the Tantra. The Tantra regards them as rather important and a useful piece of equipment, as it were, in difficult and dangerous times. This, again, was something that was very much in the air when I arrived in England in 1964 and made my first contacts at the Hampstead Vihāra and the Buddhist Society. There was a lot of talk about being very careful not to hanker after psychic powers, because it was very dangerous. Christmas Humphreys, I remember, told me to be sure to warn people at the beginning of my meditation classes that they were on no account to try to develop psychic powers. I think this was all a left-over from Theosophy. The general impression seems to have been that most of the people who came along for meditation were looking for psychic powers and that this should be discouraged. Has anybody actually found this? because I didn't. It was never even mentioned by any of the people coming along, and they didn't seem to be hankering after psychic powers at all.

**Vajradaka:** People seem to be quite turned on by the idea of magic. I don't know that they particularly want it, but if it was a by-product they'd be very happy. *[Laughter]*

p.72                      In general, the practitioner passes through three stages: imomentary contemplationî, which is virtually indistinguishable from mindfulness; the stage of iaccessî, wherein one is said to stand on the threshold of the transic experience; and [191]iecstasyî, the experience of *Dhyāna* or *Samāpatti*.

**S:** Very broadly speaking one can say, with regard to these three stages, that in the first one's mind is concentrated - maybe with a little effort, or even force - on the level of one's ordinary consciousness. It's concentration in the most ordinary sense. You are concentrating on your breath, for instance, much as you might be concentrating on the book you are reading or the meal that you are cooking provided, of course, that you were doing this really well. Access concentration is when you start getting somewhat beyond that. You are not fully and definitely in the first *dhyāna*, but you are sort of halfway between your ordinary mental state - when you are concentrated - and that higher state. In the state of what Dr. Matics calls iecstasyî, which is not a very good word, you are fully in the first *dhyāna* state. This is the classification which is usually given. Out of the 40 topics of meditation enumerated in this tradition - and not everybody agrees that the list is exhaustive - there are some topics which are able to lead you through all three stages, while others can take you only part of the way.

p.72                      The subjects are chosen with extreme care, in accordance to the individual's need: Whichever is his greatest problem, greed (*lobha*), hate (*dvesa*), or delusion (*moha*), that is the aspect of his character which is considered to be in the most urgent need of treatment.

**S:** Very often it's difficult to tell what an individual's greatest problem is. The classification presupposes that you are predominantly greedy, predominantly hating, or predominantly deluded, but usually it seems that all three are there in full force, and it's very difficult to see which one is preponderating. It's a question of just tackling the one that it seems most convenient to tackle at the moment, and gradually getting round to the others.

p.72                      Only friendliness and the remembrance of death are said to be universally applicable.

**S:** So you're quite safe with these two, regardless of temperament. [People who are liable to depression, however, should be careful about practising the remembrance of death.]

**Aśvajit:** What is ělimited apertureí?

**S:** Thatís a particular limited space that you concentrate on without there being anything in that space to which you actually direct your attention.

**Aśvajit:** Like the limits of the room, for instance?

**S:** Yes ... Youíll find all the 40 topics of meditation described in great detail in the middle section, or middle volume, of the *Visuddhimagga*. Itís quite useful - especially for anyone teaching meditation - to know this material. Though itís not all equally relevant, some of it is very useful indeed.

At this point it occurs to me to say something about books on meditation. Every now and then, in the past, Íve been asked if I could recommend a good book on meditation, and Íve said, ěWell, there just isnít one.í The nearest to a good book on meditation, as far as [192] I know, is Chih-Íís *Dhyāna for Beginners*, which is in Dwight Goddardís *A Buddhist Bible*. Thereís another translation - though perhaps not so good, in a way - by Charles Luk. *Dhyāna for Beginners* is a very useful work indeed. Chih-I, who lived in the sixth century, was the virtual founder of the Tíien-tai (Chinese) or Tendai (Japanese) School, and this little book was compiled from lectures given to disciples.

**Mike:** Is the translation in *A Buddhist Bible* complete?

**S:** Not quite, unfortunately. In one chapter various quasi-magical methods of dealing with *dhyāna* illnesses are described, and the translator has left all that out as out of date. Luk, I think, hasnít, but his translation for some reason or other doesnít read very satisfactorily.

p.74                      Even the fifth *Samāpatti* (the ninth *Dhyāna*) which is almost indistinguishable from Nirvāna, is still this side of Enlightenment.

**S:** Probably this isnít anything that we need to stress too much at this stage, though itís certainly stressed very much in principle in Buddhism: that you mustnít come to a stop at any particular stage of the path. One is traditionally warned that you mustnít, especially, get over-attached to higher meditative experiences, but while one is struggling for those higher meditative experiences this has a faintly ironic ring! So I think we need not say too much about it. Itís rather like exhorting people not to slip back into the Hīnayāna, not get stuck in Nirvāna! Itís a bit unreal for us at this stage, so weíll take it as read, as it were, that even when you do get these higher meditative experiences you mustnít be attached to them, but pass on to the next and ultimately to Nirvāna itself.

p.74                      By the power of *Dhyāna* ...

**S:** One has to be quite sure what is meant by this. Itís as though the practice of meditation consolidates behind a single point the entire thrust of oneís psychic energy, and that it does this at higher and higher and more and more refined levels, so that one is able to penetrate through, as it were, by way of intuition and insight, into something unconditioned and beyond. At present, our energies are scattered over scores and hundreds of different objects, but that same energy, - stepped up from level to level, - can break through the veil of illusion - if you want to use that expression - and land us in another dimension altogether: a purely transcendental one. This is ěby the power of *Dhyāna*í in that sense. *Dhyāna* provides you with the thrust. You could also use an illustration from rocketry. Itís rather like the first stage of the rocket ( I hope Íve got my facts right here!) which carries you beyond the gravitational field of the earth and then, once youíre free of that, the second stage goes off and carries you straight towards your destination, outside the gravitational field. The second stage of the rocket is like *prajñā* or insight; the first stage like *dhyāna*.

p.74 He dwells among them as father, mother, wife, or child. He may be a master or a servant ...

**S:** This has a double meaning. It can mean that a Bodhisattva is voluntarily reborn in a certain state, as this or as that kind of person, [193] or that he adopts that sort of position in the course of his day-to-day life in this birth in order to bring himself into effective contact with people.

p.74 ... if one is satisfied with mere tranquility, he is reborn in the world of the gods; he loses, at least for a time, the chance of attaining Enlightenment ....

**S:** We don't have to worry about that just yet, but there is something analogous to it in the lives of some Friends and Order members. Suppose you go away to a nice quiet retreat centre in the country. Everything is so peaceful. There are only cows and sheep around, and you browse through your Buddhist scriptures, and do just a little bit of meditation in the morning. Apart from the odd visitor there's nothing to bother about, and you think, "Oh this is so nice and peaceful! I don't want to go back to the city and give lectures and help raise funds and all that sort of thing." On its own comparatively lower level that would be equivalent to the temptation that faces the Bodhisattva - of staying in higher meditative realms, rather than coming down to earth again and moving about helping people.

p.75 Loved ones are no less the cause of disappointment and sorrow than the world at large.

**S:** This whole passage raises quite strongly the general question of the value of personal relationships in connection with meditation and, in fact, with the spiritual life generally. Śāntideva doesn't seem to take a very favourable view, and we have to think about the matter quite carefully. We have to distinguish between spiritual friendship in the sense of *kalyāna mitrata*, on the one hand, and on the other hand a personal relationship - even with someone also committed to the spiritual life - the basis of which, however, is in fact purely mundane or, perhaps one had better say, reactive. It is, of course, this latter kind of relationship which Śāntideva is indicating as a hindrance to meditation and to one's spiritual advancement generally. Especially within the "Friends" and within the Order we have to be very clear that in the name of *kalyāna mitratā* we are not cultivating just the same sort of personal relationship as anybody else. This means, I think, really a rather radical evaluation or reevaluation of personal relationships. We hear a lot of talk about "relationships": I've certainly heard a lot of talk about them. This is an idea that we've taken over from psychology, perhaps: that there's something intrinsically valuable in personal relationships. But I think we have to question this. E. M. Forster writes somewhere that individuals matter but relations between them don't, and there's a good grain of truth here. I think that we tend to sentimentalise - when we don't romanticise - personal relationships. Very often there's nothing personal in them at all. They are so reactive that you can't really speak of them as anything genuinely personal or genuinely individual. That comes out much more, I think, when the relationship is a definitely spiritual thing (not to make too much of an antithesis between the mundane and the spiritual, though) and you are walking side by side with someone on a definitely spiritual quest. You might even find that you have developed a real spiritual relationship with people of whom you had not thought in those terms. Whereas, perhaps, your other relationships had been experiencing all sorts of extraordinary ups and downs, the real, spiritual relationships [194] had been quietly maturing, and you'd hardly noticed it. Sometimes one finds this happening.

**Gotami:** It's not always clear when the relationship involves attachment and when it is truly spiritual.

**S:** Śāntideva gives a clear indication of the criterion: "He is frustrated when the other is absent; he is confused and perturbed when the other is present." If you have that sort of experience, well, it's attachment and not spiritual fellowship. On the other hand, you can

sometimes see that it is, in fact, a spiritual fellowship that is developing because on a purely mundane level you never would have become friendly with that person. You just wouldn't have liked them. You don't find anything attractive about them in a personal sense, but spiritually you can feel very close and very warm towards them; but had it not been for the spiritual bond - that you belong to the same Order, make the same commitment, are interested in the same spiritual path - you might never have cared to know that person, or even to speak to them. There is nothing in their mundane, relative, reactive personality to attract your mundane, relative, reactive personality. All the same, if you are very strongly attracted by someone within the Movement, say, or within the Order, don't take it for granted that it is because of the common spiritual element. It might be reinforced by that, but I think it is very unlikely that it is due just to that. It is much more likely to be reactive, and simply mundane. The spiritual fellowship type of relationship takes a long time to develop and to mature. It is a matter of years, I think. It becomes very, very strong, but by quite small degrees. This seems to be the way in which it develops - probably with some exceptions. But the more reactive type of relationship very often is much more quickly begun and much more quickly over.

p.76                      When one associates with fools, he suffers through the sharing of their false values.

**S:** One need not label everybody else fools, but most of the people that one is likely to meet in the course of ordinary social life definitely entertain what we would regard as false values and it is very difficult, when you're with them, not to share their false values, not to share their valuations of things. We were talking about this the other day in connection with people thinking that Buddhism was escapism. When you are with people who feel very strongly that religion is escapism, and who discuss it in these terms, it is very difficult not to participate at least to the extent of sharing their language, - of having to speak their language, - the language of escapism, which is not your language, and the ideology of which, - the basic assumptions of which, - you don't accept. But there is this difficulty, that when one associates, we won't say with fools, but those with different values, it is very difficult not to take on those values to some extent, and you suffer from that. Has anybody experienced this?

**Gisela:** Yes. I found it very disturbing, and I didn't quite know, really, how to handle it. Exactly as you said, I found myself faced with the choice of either using the same language, and the same values, as other people, or not communicating at all.

**S:** Following Śāntideva, Dr. Matics goes on to say, "When he differs from them he loses popularity and respect." You can make enemies by just insisting on speaking your language. When you are in society, and [195] mixing with people, it is very difficult to avoid speaking their language and, therefore, implying that you accept the values of that society. Having to do this is very hurtful to you. You are going so much against the grain of your own nature and destroying, almost, something that you are carefully trying to develop and nurture.

p.76                      They are untrustworthy, and their friendship can change to hatred in a moment's time.

**S:** If you stop speaking their language and insist on speaking yours.

p.76                      The superior man they envy.

**S:** One finds a lot of that. They envy the superior man almost to the extent of denying that anyone could be really superior at all - that there is any such thing as a spiritual hierarchy. Such an idea is, indeed, very distasteful to many people.

p.76                      The equal they hate. The inferior they despise. Praise infatuates them. Blame causes anger. Self-exaltation and tawdry pleasure are all that interest them.

**S:** This raises, in a way, quite a problem. If one does accept and try to follow the Bodhisattva ideal, how is one to live in the world, in society, and mix with other people, yet not be affected by it? Not only not be affected by it, but put across whatever you have to say? It isn't at all easy. Even to survive seems difficult sometimes - just to keep your own end up and not be submerged. You probably can't do it all the time: you need periods of retreat - either being by yourself or in the company of people who share your ideal and valuations and speak your language. Otherwise you can hardly survive - and things are getting worse rather than better, as regards society in general.

p.76 ... anyone this side of Enlightenment is something of a fool according to Buddhist principles ...

**S:** Something of a fool? Completely a fool, or mad even, according to another verse.

p.77 ĩCut off your affection ....ĩ

**S:** Affection in the sense of *sneha*, which of course has a strong connotation of attachment. It's not affection in the sense of *maitri* or *mettā*. Buddhism has quite sharply distinct words for these two different things. We tend to confuse the issue by lumping everything together and calling it all love, but in Buddhism it's either *pema* or *sneha*, on the one hand, or *mettā/maitri* on the other, and the two are very sharply distinguished - *pema* or *sneha* being an infatuated, deluded, attached, projected kind of ěloveí, and *mettā* being the calm, friendly, ěimpersonalí feeling that really does desire the other person's genuine well-being and is not just trying to exploit and use. I think a great deal of harm is done by the fact that, in the English language, we've got this very ambiguous word love. A great deal of misunderstanding is created.

p.77 [The king who preserved his sanity] quickly found that being the only sane man in a country is no bed of roses, and that [196] if he wanted to keep a crown on his head, he had to go crazy with all the rest of the citizens. Otherwise, they would think him mad, instead of themselves.

**S:** That's the situation you often feel yourself in, in society. So you think, ěI'd just better go mad with all the rest of them, otherwise they'll just turn and rend me - send me to the stake or tear me to pieces. It's safer just to go mad and accept their valuations and their judgements. Why just cling on to my sanity and give myself all this trouble? Let's go mad with the rest of them.ĩ Sometimes you get this sort of feeling.

p.78 The layman, of course, is too confused for trance, but even in his troubled life, preparation is being made for the experience at a later date. All, to a greater or lesser degree, can practice some form of detachment.

**S:** The general Buddhist view, especially in Theravāda countries, is ěThe layman ... is too confused for tranceí, that is, for the serious practice of meditation. By layman, of course, is meant one who is full-time involved with his domestic and social affairs, and his duties as a citizen and so on, and who has no time or respite for other things. It would seem quite definitely that, if one is to take up the practice of meditation to any degree, some withdrawal from that full engagement in worldly life is essential, even though, technically, one remains a layman in the sense of not being a monk. If one can go out and about doing this, that and the other, - keeping up all one's worldly responsibilities and contacts, - and still preserve peace of mind, one is already a Bodhisattva. But very few people start off as Bodhisattvas. Most have to practise a measure of detachment and noninvolvement, first, and gradually try to increase that. We should be very careful not to delude ourselves here and think that we can, in fact, lead a very active social life, with lots of parties and plenty of personal contacts, and still keep up our meditation. It's really very doubtful if you can.

**Gotami:** What if one is involved in religious activities on a full-time basis?

**S:** One just has to be careful that so-called religious activities don't, in fact, become mundane. But even if one does this, however, there is still a special question with regard to meditation. As I've said in the *Survey*, in the case of the Bodhisattva, even, when it comes to meditation his arrangements for leading a double life break down. He has actually to withdraw, when he wants to practise meditation. So even though one is giving lectures and organizing meetings in the real Bodhisattva spirit, even so, if you want to practise meditation, you have to cut down even on that kind of good work. It's just a question of deciding which you need at any given moment, or whether the needs of others are not greater than your own.

**Gotami:** But then you would never get down to meditation.

**S:** Well, if you could indefinitely bear it, and indefinitely go on engaging in activities in the right spirit, you don't really need meditation. But most people, after a while, will need it, and so should give up the activities, because, if you're doing them in a tired sort of way, without the real, living inspiration, they're not going to be [197] of much use to others anyway. So you might as well get back to some meditation, and resume your activities when you've recharged your batteries, as it were. For quite a few people it will be like that. If however, you are able to recharge your batteries while in the midst of activities, fine! But if you can't do this, then you have to stop, because you've got nothing left to give any more, even though you may be going through the motions.

**Mike:** It would seem that, if one had to go off into retreat every now and then, it would be a little disruptive of the flow of the Movement as a whole.

**S:** I'm afraid that's so - unless you can recharge your battery as you're going along. But it's better that the whole Movement should come to a halt for a while, if that is really necessary - I mean, come to a halt externally. Better that there are no meetings and classes and whatever until everybody's recharged their batteries. A lot of exhausted people, flogging themselves as it were, and having to force themselves to take classes, are not going to do much good anyway. It would be much better if we all stopped, and started again after six months. No classes, no lectures. Nothing for six months: we stop - all going into retreat. Flow is not just continuity of external activities, it's continuity of the spirit of the thing. So, if everyone comes to the end of their spiritual resources, in this sense, at the same time, then we all just have to stop, and close down for six months. Why not? Apparently much better than carrying on in the wrong sort of way! I hope that it will never come to that, because I hope that different people are doing things on different time scales. Some people's phases of withdrawal and engagement are longer or shorter than others', and so on. But if it ever did happen that everybody came to the end of their phase of activity at the same time, then we'd just all have to take time off together - go away to different nooks and corners. We'd have Order members scattered all along the coast of England in little caves! We mustn't think in terms of having to keep the activities going at all costs. We haven't to do that. Even if everybody did go into retreat at the same time and came out six months later, well, what an explosion there would be then! You might have lost a few threads, or a few people have dropped out or drifted away in six months - that's quite possible. But you'd probably find most people came back again quite quickly. You might even find that your pupils had been carrying on on their own in the meantime and meeting in one another's houses. It might be quite interesting. But if everybody is mindful of what is going on in the Movement as a whole, - if, when you see that other people are on retreat, you wait a few weeks, or a few months, before dropping out and having your own period of retreat, - things can certainly be adjusted. People simply have to be aware of what others are doing and what is the situation of the Movement as a whole. In any case, I think it's quite a good thing that everybody who is actively engaged should, periodically, drop out and go on retreat, and then come back. I think this is a very good arrangement. But I don't think we should have one body of people always engaged in activities and another body of people always in retreat. I don't think that's desirable - unless of course, some of the people who are always working are able to recharge their batteries as they go along - some

can do this - or unless those in retreat are sending energising waves out in the direction of those who are actually doing the work. That also is possible. [198]

p.78                      ì... one should turn his thinking upside down.î

**Aśvajit:** Is this referring to the *parāvṛtti*?

**S:** It is analogous to it in a general way. In the Yogācāra tradition the term *parāvṛtti* is used in a quite technical sense.

p.78                      Without isolation, the process of turning upside down one's habitual views is impossible....

**S:** This is very important. Such turning upside down is impossible because your contact with society all the time consolidates your non-turned-upside-down state. You can't realise the relativity of your reactions and thought processes unless you get away on your own, or go into a totally different environment. Yes, that's another way of doing it: immersing yourself in another country, another language, another culture. But going into isolation is probably much better. I've been thinking, in the course of the last few months, that every Order member should be encouraged to spend - in the course of, say, the two or three years following his or her ordination - at least a few months in solitary retreat. This would be an extremely valuable experience. Buddhadasa is doing it at this moment. He's not completely cut off, but he has very, very few visitors. I think you get something in that way that you can't very easily get - perhaps can't get at all - in any other way. This is why the practice is very much to be encouraged. It's somewhat the same when you're just a wanderer and have no regular social contacts or relationships, and no position of responsibility. The wandering monk in India has very much that kind of experience. As a wandering monk you do see people, but very often you see different people every day, and in this way you are isolated, in a very definite sense.

**Mike:** You get this a lot with travelling. I've had the experience of feeling pretty isolated from people when travelling around.

**S:** In books of reminiscences, and in novels, there are often descriptions of the terrible desolation of the hotel bedroom when you are going from place to place - maybe as a commercial traveller, maybe as some other sort of traveller. It's just one hotel after another for weeks on end, and almost every night a different hotel bedroom - empty. There's nothing that you can feel is a bit homely. It's bare and impersonal, and the usual impulse is simply to get out, to leave it as quickly as possible, - to go to the bar, go to the pictures, - not stay in that dreadful hotel bedroom. But if you could stay there, - if you could say, "OK, here I am. I'll just sit here and experience the aloneness and the isolation," - it could be a very good thing. But most people just flee from it.

**Gotami:** It's much different in the countryside.

**S:** It is. It's less lonely.

**Gotami:** In a way it's all around you, - it goes on for ever, - whereas in a bedroom you've got four walls, and outside there's noise and so on. It's quite a different kind of feeling.

**Mary:** You can feel alone in a room full of people too.

**S:** You're alone then in the sense of being cut off, and having nothing much in common with people. [199]

**Gotami:** The thing I really enjoyed, though, was not having anything to do.

**S:** Well, that's very pleasant when one has been leading a busy life. Anyway, work permitting I would definitely like to see every Order member, not too long after his or her ordination, go off at least for a month, preferably even up to six months, - three would be a nice average, - but at least one month - alone.

**Gotami:** I think it takes the best part of a month to settle into it.

**S:** Maybe you ought to have a year off then!

p.79                      In the cultivation of indifference, there is no end to the removal of distraction and the quieting of agitation, this side of Enlightenment.

**Aśvajit:** Why this side of Enlightenment?

**S:** Presumably because, until Enlightenment has been attained, you'll still have to concern yourself with cultivating tranquillity and getting rid of distractions. To the extent that wisdom is developed, you can permanently remove some distractions even before full Enlightenment is attained, but others will remain. Consequently, until Enlightenment has been attained you've always got to be vigilant, and always leave some provision for withdrawal and retirement and quiet.

p.79                      ...the cultivation of indifference.

**S:** *Upekṣā* is much more equanimity than indifference. Indifference has a somewhat negative ring, whereas *upekṣā* is really a very positive peace and tranquillity. In fact sometimes it's used as a synonym for Nirvāna itself.

**Vajradaka:** I sometimes feel that my whole body is like a great big quivering want.

**S:** The body is a want, in a way, to the extent that it is a body. If you don't give it enough food, and enough sleep, - enough exercise, even, - what happens? It starts clamouring 'I want food; give me food, etc. The body is just that, and so is the mind, both to the extent that it reflects the body and, very often, on its own account.

**Gotami:** I find myself wanting in a different way. For instance, for meditation. It can be a bit of a hindrance, I suppose.

**S:** It's a hindrance to something even higher, but until you've achieved that you've got to cultivate it. When you are trembling on the threshold of Nirvāna, OK, you can discard your meditation, - it would be a hindrance then, - but not before. It's a stepping-stone, you have to reach the stepping-stone that lies ahead before you can leave it behind to get on to the next one.

p.79                      The Perfection of *Dhyāna*, along with *Prajñā*, is ultimately achieved in solitude.

**S:** Because otherwise, apparently, it would be, to some degree, subject to limitation and to phenomenal conditionality. This isn't really quite correct. One shouldn't understand this passage as meaning [200] that *prajñā*, especially, can only be attained in solitude, because this would make it a conditioned thing, almost, a thing that was absolutely dependent on certain mundane conditions, which *prajñā* isn't. *Prajñā* can arise, at least initially, under any circumstances whatsoever, though admittedly - especially because it's associated with *dhyāna* - it is much more likely to arise when one is in solitude, but not necessarily so. You can, in some circumstances, have a *prajñā* experience, or a *dhyāna* experience, under conditions very different from those which prevail when you are in solitude - though usually that does not happen. One must be careful not to make *prajñā* dependent upon a definite set of special conditions, because then one might say, even, that it wouldn't be *prajñā*. You find this

illustrated very well in the lives of some of the Chían monks. Some got Enlightenment sitting alone in the forest - or in the toilet. Others got it in the meditation hall, with other meditating monks all around them. Some having been unable to develop it in a meditation session, went wandering off to do, maybe, some shopping or begging in the bazaar, and suddenly got a flash of insight there. One must therefore beware of limiting *prajñā* in this kind of way, even though, admittedly, solitude is a much more likely environment for the development of *dhyāna* and *prajñā*.

**Gotami:** I must admit that, on reading this passage, I understood it to mean *ēby oneself*, not in the sense of *oneís being in isolation* but of *making oneís own effort*.

**S:** Either interpretation would be correct. It would be by oneself, i.e. by oneís own effort, that one gained Enlightenment, whether one was alone or with other people.

**Gotami:** Nobody can gain Enlightenment for you.

**S:** Right. Yes.

**Gotami:** What about *ētrees* make much better companions than *people*?

**S:** I think *Śāntideva* is being poetical. This is hyperbole. In a way itís true, but not in a literal sense. Trees certainly donít trouble you, or talk to you when you donít want to be talked to. In that sense, I suppose, trees can perhaps be regarded as better companions than human beings. But a tree canít be a *kalyāna mitra*, not in the real sense - again only very metaphorically can you make the tree a *kalyāna mitra* and say, *ēOh itís teaching me wonderful lessons by standing there all straight and steady!* etc., etc. But thatís just you telling you, using the tree as a hook to hang all these observations on. If you get into real trouble, and need someone else, a tree canít do very much.

p.80                      Somewhere there may possibly be a Bodhisattva of limited achievement who is a householder. *Śāntideva* mentions the type twice in the *Śikṣā-samuccaya*, and the concept is not unknown to other Buddhist writers; but the prevailing ideal of both *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna* is celibacy and solitude. The man who has succumbed to the attachments of the householderís life must purify himself by living alone in the forest for a while, realizing that lust is no more than a fire of cow-dung, and that sons and wives are chains of entanglement. Kingship itself is to be renounced like a snot of phlegm, because supreme Enlightenment cannot be achieved by those who are subservient to illusionary value. [201]

**S:** This may sound a bit uncompromising, but perhaps itís good to be like that sometimes. On the whole the passage is a very fair statement of the general Buddhist position, and, as Dr. Matics points out, it represents both the *Hīnayāna* and the *Mahāyāna* tradition.

**Mike:** Since that degree of emphasis is placed on solitude, how would this fit in, say, with our own Movement, and life in a place like London? I mean, how regularly is it necessary to have the complete solitude that heís suggesting?

**S:** Well, the last sentence of the paragraph says, *ēIsolation for limited periods appears to be always desirable.* Even when one is engaged in highly worthwhile general spiritual activities, and engaged in them in the right spirit, an occasional bout of solitude for purposes of refreshment, or for a periodic check-up on oneís motives, I think is - this is the orthodox ideal - to wander about for the greater part of the year, wandering from place to place, doing his daily practice, begging his food and, also, preaching to people. But for the rainy season he



... the attitude of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* is on the side of melancholy common sense.

**S:** I don't quite agree with that expression 'melancholy common sense', because the actual experience which results from these practices is certainly not one of melancholy - a very ego-centred emotion. The experience that arises is very much one of exhilaration, and zest, and enthusiasm for getting on with the spiritual life, as well as a very positive kind of detachment. It's certainly not a dull and depressing experience. If you think that it's likely to be that, then that type of practice isn't for you. You should feel exhilarated after visiting the cemetery, not depressed. If it makes you depressed, don't do it. Depression isn't very helpful. In Tibetan Buddhism, especially, we find that they engage in these practices in a very positive spirit, and make use of human skins and human skulls with a kind of glee. They're not at all depressed, or sorrowful, or melancholy, because they really do rise above the ego. They really do get a much loftier perspective on things - really do see the whole chain of birth and death, and feel themselves a bit detached from that, and really rising above it and getting on to the spiritual path that leads beyond reincarnation. Thus it's all very, very positive, and very inspiring. There's nothing [203] morbid or melancholy about these practices - not when they are done in the right way, and by the person to whom they are suited.

Another consideration occurs to me. I'm not quite certain what is happening, and I have to use the word 'vibration' which I'm not very happy about - but I haven't found a substitute, or a better word. It's as though for psychological health each person needs a certain space around himself or herself, even quite literally speaking. It's been noticed in zoos, for example, that animals kept in cages which are so small that their aura, so to speak, is left partly outside the cage, where it can be 'invaded' by human beings or other animals, suffer very much, and even get quite neurotic, as it were. It's as though the cage has to be big enough to accommodate the whole aura, so that it is not trespassed upon. Now if you are living with other people in such a way that your auras are overlapping - and perhaps some people have bigger auras than others - then you feel very uncomfortable. A lot of tension builds up, a lot of pressure, and you may even become rather savage and aggressive - just as animals do when a lot of them are kept together in a very confined space. Human beings do seem to need a certain space around them, quite literally.

**Gotami:** There's a particular sort of feeling, when you get that, and if at that point you do just reveal yourself, and let people know that they're trespassing, then it's OK; but by ignoring that you can allow a lot of tension to build up in yourself.

**Dhruva:** I know there are some people I can stand closer to than others.

**S:** Well, there may be people whose auras, as it were, - or vibrations, to use that horrible word, - are more harmonious with yours. Perhaps that is the explanation.

**Gotami:** I find that there are some people - very few, actually - with whom I really don't want to be in the same room. They just feel very, very agitated. It's not even that they're particularly aggressive ... yet there's an uncomfortable feeling. Even if they're coming up the stairs they can disturb your meditation.

**S:** Their aura comes ahead.

**Vajradaka:** It just shows how big the aura is! When I was at Quaesitor there was a woman who could sense auras, and she said that most people when they were relaxed and there was no tension, and when they were quite centred, had an aura forty feet wide. She said that's why she could sense most people a block away, because she'd walk into their aura. She said that it could definitely expand and contract.

**Mike:** At No. 5 I'm generally aware who's in the house and who isn't, whether I've heard any doors banging or not. I just kind of feel it ... I know that Jerry's in, or Paddy, or Jim. It's a very confined area that we live in.

**Vajradaka:** It's interesting to watch different races and their relationship to the space around them. If you go into the Tube in London, most English people require about three feet around them - maybe a little less. If others start coming into that area they get a little bit nervous. In Japan people can be right up, six inches close, before they get nervous, but in America, I'm told, it's about six feet, and if people come into that space they get quite paranoid.[204]

**Gisela:** I think it's about ten miles in London. *[Laughter]*

**Vajradaka:** It's quite noticeable, the difference between Japan and England, though.

**S:** Probably the fact that the Japanese have got used to that - they've probably had to get used to it - cannot have had a very healthy effect on them. They're about the most neurotic people in the world, apparently, and have the highest suicide rate, I think. There's a lot of psychic pressure when so many people are so close, and this is why they sometimes explode - there is this aspect to the question too. Sometimes you need to relax and let your aura expand to its fullest capacity.

**Vajradaka:** That brings up an interesting point. If you're in a cave, and you're surrounded by rock, can your aura then actually spread out, or is it bounced back by all the rock on to you?

**Dhruva:** From what you were saying earlier on, if you can feel people coming a block away, how is it that the aura can penetrate walls and buildings but not rock?

**S:** I would say that your aura is limited by or feels pressure from other living beings, mostly from human beings, much less so from animals, and even less from, say, vegetable matter - though I remember that when we were staying at Broomhouse Farm I could definitely feel something coming from all those trees, something not particularly pleasant. I rather wondered about that.

**Vajradaka:** The elves there are pretty militant.

**S:** Oh, have you seen any elves?

**Vajradaka:** I've not actually seen them, but I've had the impression of spiky spears, and bows and arrows, and gaunt faces.

**Gisela:** Broomhouse Farm? I've felt it there too.

**S:** I went for several walks [in the plantations] there, and I definitely felt, coming from the trees and the vegetation, something quite hostile.

**Subhuti:** They're so regimented and strictly laid out, I wonder if it isn't just an impression of nature congested and confined.

**Mary:** They're probably neurotic.

**S:** Yes, that's right. Neurotic trees!

**Mike:** When I was on the last men's retreat there the Phantoms at the air base nearby were revving their engines at the end of the runway. Suddenly they'd cut off, and you get this tremendous kind of kick-back in the woods - a kind of clapping sound. That to me was very threatening - much more so than the aircraft themselves. You know, the echo ... I had an image of the ringwraiths in *The Lord of the Rings*.

**S:** Maybe all that revving, and all those vibrations, shake the trees up quite a bit, and maybe they just don't like it. It could be that.

**Vajradaka:** Maybe when they were young - when they were in their nurseries - human beings didn't treat them very well! *[Laughter]*

**S:** There is an analogy, actually. All living substance feels and is sensitive, and every living thing is connected with every other [205] living thing. You must have heard about the experiments conducted in America. Plants apparently react to what is going on in the neighbourhood. For instance, if you kill a chicken in the backyard the effect of that action on all the vegetation in the neighbourhood can be registered. It reacts in a particular way to the fact that something is losing its life and is terrified. You can even affect plants by thinking about them. A lot of tests have been conducted on this. They've even sealed the plants up in lead boxes, and still the thought has penetrated. If all life is interconnected in this way on a purely biological level, which seems to be the case, you can clearly speak of plants and other living things as suffering, or being upset, or even as being neurotic, provided you don't speak too anthropomorphically. There would be definite truth in that, even scientific truth. You could have a forest of angry trees. There is certainly something there - I've felt it myself very tangibly. I've also felt that if I let my imagination loose a bit I could quite easily start seeing things if I wanted to: Pan-like figures among the trees, and so on. It wouldn't be very difficult to persuade yourself that you had seen them! There's something you could quite definitely call hostile, or at least inimical. So trees aren't necessarily better companions, you see! I don't know if Śāntideva knew about that, but if you had contented trees - happy trees in nice friendly little family groups - then there might be a quite different sort of atmosphere.

**Mike:** When you can pick up on something in the environment in that kind of negative way, could it be a hindrance to one's practice?

**S:** It could be if you let it worry you, or if it was affecting you objectively in any way. Ideally you should respond with positive vibrations, but then that means work on your environment, and you may not be wanting to do that. You may want an environment where you can ignore what's around you and just work on yourself, in which case you'd be best advised to change your environment.

**Mike:** Why is the cave regarded as such an ideal place to meditate?

**S:** Just because you really are alone there, and can't be seen. There are no distractions, and it's also practical. It's a ready-made shelter.

**Mike:** I just wondered if there was any deep significance.

**S:** Well, you could give it one. It's womb-like, and in it you are being spiritually reborn. You could bring in the symbolism of the Cave of Bethlehem, the Mithraic Cave - the Cave of Initiation, etc. Originally, it was probably just a practical convenience: a hole in the rock that you could creep into and be all quiet and safe from the rain. But this whole question of sensitivity is very interesting. As you practise more, especially as you practise meditation, you do become more sensitive and more aware and you have to take that fact into account or be able, perhaps, to devise your own counter-measures and *mettā* practices. The latter, of course, would be very useful here.

**Vajradaka:** Do you think we come across people who are more susceptible to the influence of, say, hungry ghosts? For instance, the hungry ghosts are sort of attracted to those people and try to get into their bodies....

**S:** This can happen only when you've got yourself into a very negative state. It seems that there are three really negative states [206] which can lay you open to possession - that's the only word for it - maybe quite literally: intense fear, intense craving, and intense hatred. Perhaps the last is the most common.

**Mike:** What should you do if you found yourself in that situation?

**S:** If you're in such a negative state as to be 'possessed' by something or other you've really sunk very low, and there's little you can do about it. Traditionally, you just run as quickly as you can to the Sangha and be with them. Go to some holy place where there are very positive people and maybe get them to chant for you. You can't do much else at that stage.

**Mike:** I was referring to something that happened to me, in fact to when I became intensely afraid while sitting in the shrine room at the Centre one night on my own. I felt that I was being stalked by something or someone. I could hear noises around me, and I could also feel a rhythm beat out on the shrine room floor. I rationalised it in the end by saying that it was only my pulse in my leg, but I don't think it could have been that. I had a very definite feeling of presence and I felt that if I moved or did anything I would somehow be lost. I just had to sit right through it, but it was a very intense experience of fear.

**S:** There are two quite distinct things here. One is the intense experience of, in this case, fear. If you are able to sit it out that's fine. In a way that's best, because you have, as it were, conquered it. It can't get back at you. What I have in mind is an intense state of this kind not only experienced for some time but also indulged in and surrendered to. When that happens then you are definitely open to some influence from outside.

**Mike:** What do you mean 'surrendered to'?

**S:** You give up fighting it or struggling with it. You are unable to see that it's something that ought not to be allowed to happen, ought not to be cultivated. Thus it becomes almost a permanent state, and then you are liable to a sort of possession. I had an experience once, in this connection, which was really odd. It was when I was at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihāra, and it concerned a friend of Terry Delamare's. Terry had a friend from his advertising days with whom he still kept up some contact, and this chap fell violently in love with a girl whom Terry knew, who worked in the same agency. For some reason or other, she wanted nothing at all to do with him. She was totally unresponsive and uninterested. This state of affairs continued for some time, and it really played upon this fellow, who really was violently infatuated. He started trying to talk to the girl, though she didn't want to talk to him, - wouldn't talk to him, - and even accosted her in the street. In the end she had had to complain to the police, and he was warned not to interfere with her. The result was he not only became more infatuated than ever, but gradually got into a more and more negative state of intense frustrated craving, anger and so on. Anyway, Terry kept in contact with him, and tried to talk to him sometimes. But it was quite useless. One weekend, when Terry was at the Vihāra and this chap had gone home to his mother's place, which was about fifty miles from London, Terry said to me, 'I have a feeling this chap's in a really bad way, so I've given him the Vihāra telephone number and told him I'll be here in case he feels the need to ring me.' That evening Terry got a phone call from this chap and he said, 'I'm going to commit suicide. [207] I can't stand it any longer.' That was at 7 o'clock. Terry was talking to him on the phone for about two hours, trying to dissuade him, but it was such a heavy sort of situation that at the end of that time Terry was nearly collapsing. He put his hand over the mouthpiece and said, 'Can you talk to this chap?' I'd never met him, and didn't know him, but I said 'If you like, I will; but just say a few words of introduction first.' So Terry said, 'Look here, Bill, I've just got to go somewhere for a few minutes, but I've a friend here who'll talk to you. He's a good friend of mine. He's a Buddhist monk. Just listen to what he has to say.' I took the receiver from Terry, who almost collapsed that very moment, and I talked to this fellow for quite a long time. As soon as he started speaking, however, I had the definite impression: 'He is possessed. I am not talking to a human being, I'm talking to what has possessed him,' a sort of demonic entity. There was that definite perception, and I at once thought to myself, 'It's hopeless. It's too late. He's lost.' But I did my best. Taking it turn and turn about Terry and I were talking to him on the phone till 2 o'clock in the morning. We then thought - Terry especially thought - that the immediate danger had passed, so we sort of drew a long breath and had a cup of tea, and then I went to bed and Terry went home saying he would be back early in the morning. He came around, feeling a bit uneasy, at 7 o'clock, and just after he

arrived there was a phone call from the chap's mother. It was to say that at 5 o'clock he'd committed suicide. I'll never forget the strong impression I had that I was not talking to a human being any more. Whatever it was had taken possession of him had been given an opening by the negative emotions - and the chap really was in a state. This is the kind of thing I have in mind. He'd indulged the craving. He'd surrendered to it. He hadn't tried to do anything about it. His attitude was, 'I have a right to this girl if I want her. Why doesn't she respond? I must have her, and so on, over a long period.

**Vajradaka:** Then this means that in any place where craving or fear or hatred are usually felt there's the likelihood of - whatever they are - *pretas*, being there: pubs, army camps, public schools ... [Laughter]

**S:** Brothels too. This is why it is sometimes said that, as a matter of spiritual hygiene, one should be very careful not to associate with prostitutes. Not only not associate sexually, but even socially, because the circumstances under which they usually contact other people, i.e. men, are - from the spiritual point of view - very negative indeed, and there's a sort of aura of negativity clinging to such persons. The same with slaughterhouses, and people connected with the meat trade. Of course this is a marginal sort of thing, and one mustn't make too much of a point of it, but it is something which does exist. You can pick up things from other people in that way.

**Vajradaka:** I think that gaming parlours are particularly like this.

**S:** Maybe. I've never been in one, but I should imagine so. Craving again!

**Mary:** In some houses you can feel this if you just go in.

**S:** Yes, you feel the unrest - or the peace, sometimes. Speaking from personal experience, I would say that when you live in a place like London your perceptions may get a bit blurred, because there's so much coming at you. You lose your sensitivity to a great extent. But when you go away into solitude you get it back, or even develop it and become more sensitive than you were before. [208]

**Mike:** How does something like possession relate to somebody who is psychologically disturbed in the more conventional sense? Are the two states related in any way?

**S:** I don't really know. The state of what I call possession is quite an extreme one. I think we've had the odd person around, in the course of years, who might have been in a state of that sort, but it is quite rare. When I use such terms as 'possession' and 'demonic entity' I'm just using certain terms. I'm not committing myself to any particular theory. All that I am doing is describing the impression made upon me, and I find that the language of 'possession' and 'demonic entity' is the most suitable for this purpose. I'm not saying that I literally do believe in such a thing as a demonic entity, or in demonic possession. There may be such a thing: I don't know. But that sort of language certainly fits the facts as experienced. Of course it may be that, in the last analysis, the demonic entity is a sort of broken-off fragment of the personality of the person who is supposedly being possessed - that is also quite possible. But the effect on him is very definitely that of an entity of a diabolical nature that has come in from outside. That's certainly the impression you get, whatever the actual facts may be. There must be something pretty seriously wrong to produce that sort of impression so powerfully - regardless of the actual nature of the disturbance, or however it is to be really explained.

**Gisela:** I got that feeling with a disturbed person one day when I saw him at Community Stores and he started fighting and hitting people. When he appeared it seemed to me that his whole body was quivering with something - you know, that had possessed him.

**S:** I saw a man like that once. It was not long after my return to England in '64. I was on the Tube, sitting down, and there was a man standing in the doorway [on the other side of the

gangway, ten or twelve feet along], waiting for the next stop. He was a quite ordinary sort of chap - rather a rough, working-class type of about 30 or 40. He had his back to me, more or less, and as I looked at him I got a peculiar impression: "That chap is possessed. That's not a human being, that's a little devil!" So I kept my eye on him. I was quite interested, and he must have felt this - well, he did feel it. He didn't turn round, or do anything like that, but when the train stopped at the station where he wanted to get down, he turned round very deliberately, gave me a very diabolical grin, sort of thumbed his nose at me - and was off! (*Astonishment.*) Yes! It was really quite odd - and I knew at once that it was not a human being but some entity in a human body. I have had two or three experiences like that in the course of my life. It's something quite different: definitely non-human, even anti-human. I don't know what it is, but he knew that I was watching him, and he knew that I recognised him for what he was. He knew that - and he showed that he knew I knew, but that he wasn't bothering too much about me. "Now I'm off!" he seemed to be saying, "Do what you can!" It was a bit like a challenge.

**Vajradaka:** There's a reference in *The Precepts of the Gurus* to spiritual armour.

**S:** That sort of language - the armour of *ksānti*, the sword of *vīrya*, and so on - is used in a very general sort of way, but it can also be taken as having reference to psychic entities. You have to beware, however, of becoming a bit fanciful and imagining things that are not really there. But there's certainly a residue of rather odd [209]experiences, such as I myself have had, and - explain them as you may, - I don't insist on any particular kind of explanation, - I do find that the traditional language of "possession" and so on does correspond with one's actual impression, even though "possession" may not be the real explanation. All the same, I don't want to have people feeling a bit precious about auras and atmospheres, and walking into a room and saying, "Gosh, some beautiful thing must have happened here last week!" or enquiring whether a murder hadn't been committed there. We don't want people behaving like that.

**Gotami:** It doesn't seem a particularly relevant thing to do.

**S:** It's usually best to keep your impressions to yourself and, if you feel that something needs to be done, just do it quietly, without saying anything to anyone.

**Subhuti:** It does seem to be necessary to be aware of this dimension of things, because I find it very difficult to accept; but I can think of experiences that I've had which are not really intelligible in any other terms and which at the time I was completely confused by.

**S:** At least, one shouldn't hesitate to use the appropriate language, or the language that seems appropriate, even if it is a bit odd reserving one's judgement about the meaning of the actual facts until later.

**Mary:** Is it possible for these entities to be exorcised, as in some of the stories that one reads, so that they leave a human being?

**S:** There are two different things here. One is the idea of exorcism as a forcible expulsion. The other is that of "converting" the entities. The first is more Christian, though the Tibetans also go in for it a lot. The second seems more Buddhist.

**Mary:** Does this mean the entities are transformed?

**S:** Yes. You send out such positive vibrations, as it were, that they not only protect you, to begin with, from those negative forces, but if you can keep them up they have a transforming effect on the negative forces themselves. You don't just throw the latter out to cause trouble somewhere else, but finally convert them by your powerful thoughts and vibrations - "powerful" in the sense of being very positive. It's not that you try to exorcise them by means of a stronger psychic counter-force. That might expose you to them a bit more, actually, if you weren't careful.

**Vajradaka:** When they are converted you could always ordain them! [Laughter]

**Gotami:** Use them as dragons to ride on! [More laughter]

**Subhuti:** A psychologist friend of mine did some work with a Nigerian tribe who exorcised schizophrenia by having a massive party. The whole village goes into a sort of festival, which is centred on the - in Western terms - schizophrenic person, and the effect is that he accepts that [split-off] part of himself because it's accepted by the others.

**S:** It's not even just that. Quite recently I was reading a book called *Ecstatic Religion*, which is a study of spirit-possession in certain African tribes. According to the author of this book, research has shown that such possession is in some cases quite clearly explicable in ordinary psychological terms. A woman becomes 'possessed' and [210] a spirit speaks through her, very angrily abusing certain things and certain people. In this case too the treatment is often a big feast, of which the woman is the centre. I forget the details, but the author shows, very convincingly, that the usual pattern is that the possessed person is in a position of inferiority and is suffering in some way. Tribal custom doesn't permit her to speak openly about her grievance and it gets repressed, so the spirit speaks, because if it's the spirit speaking that's OK. In other words, the woman becomes possessed, and then, of course, she becomes a centre of attention, with everything happening around her. A lot is done for her, a lot of money is spent on her, and this has a very positive effect. Since what she's usually clamouring for is attention, or some sort of restitution of rights, things usually work out quite well, but it's not a genuine case of possession, apparently, but a sort of psychological mechanism, almost one of self-preservation. It's usually women who become possessed, because they are more likely to suffer from deprivation of certain rights, or from lack of consideration. They don't have much voice in social life, but the spirit will always be taken notice of. People won't usually take notice of the women, but they'll take notice of the spirit! It's as though the only way in which a woman can get herself taken notice of is by becoming 'possessed'. This is the mechanism that had developed. Cases of possession often occurred in families in which there were several wives, including a chief wife, and in which a younger or a junior wife was very much repressed by the older ones. The basic psychological pattern is very clear, but the mechanism by which the balance is restored in a situation of injustice and suffering is 'possession', and so the spirit speaks, saying, 'I want this. You must give me that.'

I must say quite frankly that some of the leaders of the women's liberation movement seem possessed. I've heard one or two of them. They really do seem possessed. I heard one at the Roundhouse, at the end of the 'Dialectics of Liberation' congress. It really was extraordinary. She was shrieking and howling about the way in which women were suppressed exactly as though an evil spirit had got into her. I noticed the same sort of thing in the United States with some of the Black Power activists. In a very strange sort of way, they too seemed possessed.

p.83

The principal aim of the discipline required for the achievement of the first five perfections is the quieting of the turbulent *citta*, so that intuitive Wisdom, the sixth perfection, may be achieved.

**S:** In other words you can regard the first five *pāramitās* as all contributing to *śamathā* in a Mahāyāna sense. Between them they represent a sort of calming down of the whole conditioned nature, as well as a refinement of it, a bringing of it to the ever higher levels of experience and sensitivity comprehended under the term *samādhi*. In this way that nature is prepared for the descent, as it were, of *prajñā* or transcendental wisdom, which is the remaining *pāramitā*.

Solitary places help in the quieting of superficial disturbance, although such disturbance is ultimately mental: and they provide opportunity for disciplining the mind in deeper depth. [211]

**Gotami:** I think the great advantage of going off on your own is that you are liberated from the thought of anything else.

**S:** If you are a normally healthy person you just become naturally concentrated and naturally peaceful when you are left on your own.

**Mike:** Would you say it is, perhaps, almost enough just to be completely alone for a period?

**S:** I think it very often is.

**Mike:** Better than getting on with a particular practice very intensively?

**S:** People's experiences differ, but I think that with some people at least - people whom I regard as really normal and healthy - when you get into a situation of bodily isolation, - you know, not meeting other people, having nobody else around maybe for miles, and having nothing to do, - you quite naturally and quite spontaneously go into a state equivalent to that of meditation. There's no reason why you shouldn't do. It may not be necessary, - or there may not be very much point in, your actually doing certain exercises. You may do them, further to enhance that state, but you could very profitably just be like that, simply performing your chores every day, and have the same benefit that you get from a bout of meditation. That's quite possible. You don't have to be engaging in exercises, and keeping yourself busy. That could, in a subtle way, be a running away from the experience - having something to do so that time passes more quickly. "Gosh, I'm half an hour behind with my *asubha-bhāvanā*!" But just being by yourself, if you are a normal, peacefully-minded person, is experience enough, very often, under those sort of circumstances: you don't need to meditate, in a way. There's only one thing you must watch. If you find the mind looking round for something to do, - if you pick up a book in an idle sort of way, or if you start wondering what's in the newspapers, - then you ought to take up specific exercises. But if you can remain quite happy having nothing to do, just enjoying the isolation and the sense of your own existence, that's quite enough. You don't need to meditate in a formal way. You sit quietly down, you look out of the window - you're meditating. As I've said, this is what happens if you're a normal, healthy, peacefully-minded person. For some people this kind of thing wouldn't be good at all. Terrible mental conflicts would arise. They might get extremely agitated. Such people might be better advised to have actual practices to do. There's quite a difference between going into solitude to work on your own mind and going into solitude to enjoy your naturally blissful mental state. The latter is quite often possible, and in a way it's very much the better of the two, but it is something that either happens or doesn't happen.

... [the Bodhisattva] is able to enter into meditation with a certain object in mind, remake the universe into that object, and then return to phenomenality as the object of his meditational experience.

**S:** In the paragraph which concludes with this sentence Dr. Matics is obviously having to feel his way among experiences that he knows about only from his study of Buddhist texts, and he clearly isn't altogether at home - though he has done, in a way, quite a good job simply presenting the traditional material. [212]

**Aśvajit:** I'm not quite clear, actually, about the last few lines of this passage, or how he is able to enter into meditation with a certain object in mind, remakes the universe into that object ....

**S:** He gives an example, immediately afterwards, involving Vimalakirti. The Bodhisattva, for instance, in his meditation at the time of death, at the end of a particular life, meditates on say a child - he in a sense creates the child - and when he emerges from his meditation he is the child. This is not just given as an example. One may take it literally or not - it's all connected with the question of how rebirth takes place. But it's given as an example of the kind of power that the Bodhisattva can exercise dwelling, as he does, upon that *éplateau* - as the editor calls it - which represents the highest level of phenomenal existence, immediately *ébelow* Nirvāna - a level where the mind is in a very highly developed and potent state and where it can even exercise what are usually regarded as magical powers. Perhaps it's not necessary to dwell upon this too much, but sometimes, when the mind is highly concentrated, things sort of happen. However one shouldn't bother too much - or even at all, maybe - about trying to make things happen, because playing around in this way can be a distraction.

**Gotami:** Is this in any way connected with the Bodhisattva creating another body?

**S:** Yes, this is said to be one of the powers achieved at this level. I have known at least one person about whom there were strange stories of him appearing in different places at the same time. This was Swami Ramdas, about whom I've written in my memoirs. It was definitely established that at the very time he was with a number of disciples in one place other people had seen him and spoken to him in another. This is an example of the kind of happening to which I referred. This sort of thing does seem to occur. The Buddhist explains it as a faculty which can be exercised when, with the attainment of that very high level of concentration and consolidation of *chitta*, the power of *chitta* is also attained. This is a state short of Nirvāna itself. After that, there is only Nirvāna. The Bodhisattva is, in a manner of speaking, suspended on that plane. He's well in view of Nirvana, but he doesn't actually enter into it. He remains skilfully poised or balanced on that *éplateau*, with one eye as it were on Nirvāna - he never loses sight of that - but at the same time engaging in activities for the benefit of other people, and using there the power which he generates on that higher plane of concentrated *chitta*. That's one way of looking at the Bodhisattva ideal.

**Gotami:** If I understand correctly, it seems that you are saying that one should not even think about it but just carry on and let happen what happens.

**S:** Yes. Not to make it too much a subject for speculation or theoretical working out, and not to just play around with it in an experimental way. For instance, there are many people - in the *éFriends* also - who know that there is such a thing as telepathy. There are all sorts of odd little experiences, all sorts of things that happen, even with the Movement itself, that one can't explain on any other basis. But most people, I think, simply accept that telepathy is just one of those things that happen. No one thinks in terms of subjecting it to experiments and playing around with it in that sort of way [*Laughter*] - not so far as I know! Personally, I find no difficulty in accepting [213] the fact of telepathy, because I've seen so much of it, but I don't have the least inclination, - perhaps I'm not scientifically minded enough, - to investigate it from that point of view. I'm not particularly interested in proving that telepathy does exist to someone who doesn't believe in it.

**Gotami:** But might not that particular faculty be quite a useful one to develop?

**S:** I think it develops when it's really useful. That seems to be what happens. If you really need a degree of it, then it will be there. When I was living at No. 55 I had some odd experiences with Kevin. Whenever he came back from work, I knew at once what mental state he was in, whether positive or negative. I knew it as soon as the front door opened, even though I was in my study right down the corridor.

**Subhuti:** But I've noticed that you can tell that with Kevin, from the way he turns the key. [*Laughter*] It needn't be a mental transference.

**S:** I thought of that, actually, but I found it worked even when I hadn't heard him open the door. There really is a dimension that you become more sensitive to, especially if you go into

solitude and don't have much to do with other people's vibrations. Then, when you do come into contact with people, you are much more aware of them and pick up much more quickly on where they are at and what sort of mood they are in.

p.85                      Isolation of the body is entirely secondary: a mere aid  
for the weaker brethren ...

**S:** I think we have to be careful about this talk of 'the weaker brethren', because practically everybody is included in this category. We should be really careful not to automatically exempt ourselves.

p.85                      ...he must keep a 'cave-and-forest' mind

**S:** This is of course quite difficult. Real solitude is admittedly a mental state, but for most people this is practically impossible to achieve without some degree of physical isolation too, at least to begin with. So we shouldn't hesitate to include ourselves among the weaker brethren. Neither should we rationalise and think, 'Ah well, what does it matter if I'm living in a city? It's detachment of mind that really matters. What does it matter if I don't attend classes? I'll be mentally present.' There can very easily be this sort of false reasoning, and we have to watch it. But equally, of course, there's not much point in living in a little cave and wondering what's going on in the world outside all the time. In our case we are very unlikely to do that. Our danger lies much more in the opposite direction.

**Aśvajit:** It only takes a day or two by oneself to realise to what extent one can deceive oneself as to the degree of one's detachment.

**S:** Yes. Also convince oneself how much one has been missing! That also becomes very obvious sometimes.

p.85                      ...Śāntideva pays particular attention to the false  
claims of love (*kāma*) and of general prosperity  
(*artha*). [214]

**S:** These are the first two out of the four aims of human life according to orthodox Hindu tradition, the other two being *dharma* and *mokṣa*. *Kama* is satisfaction of the senses, especially through sex; *artha* is wealth and economic prosperity; *dharma* is religious merit, in the more conventional sense: and *mokṣa* is spiritual liberation.

p.86                      ...separation from the underlying bases of continued  
existence will have even greater and more devastating  
effect than isolation of either body or mind.

**Gotami:** I don't know that I could explain to anybody what was meant by that.

**S:** Well, 'the underlying bases of continued existence' are, especially, those conditioned mental activities - the *saṃskārās*, in terms of the twelve *nidanās* - which keep the whole process going from life to life and from one moment to the next. They represent the deeper level that you've got to get at, - the root of the conditioned or reactive mind, - it's separation from that which is essential. But first comes physical separation, being quietly by yourself, and then separation from the different activities of the mind itself: fantasies and imaginations and distractions. Finally, going even deeper - and this is possible only with the help of wisdom - one cuts through the very root of the reactive mind, so that there is no further rebirth - no further conditioned existence. Obviously the last is the most difficult of all, but that's the real separation: the separation from 'the underlying bases of continued [conditioned] existence.'

Pp.85                      ...now [the lover] cannot stand the sight of the thing  
which so fervently he wished to behold.

**S:** There are lots of stories in Buddhist literature illustrating this point - like the famous one about the nun Utpalavanna (I think it was). While trying to get on with her meditation in the forest she was accosted by a young man who was infatuated with her beautiful eyes and who started praising them to her. Utpalavanna said, "Oh it's my beautiful eyes that you want, do you? All right, you can have them!" Thereupon she tore them out and placed them in the young man's hand. He was really horrified, of course, was converted to the spiritual life, etc., etc. *[Laughter]* Do you get the idea?

**Vajradaka:** Needless to say the Buddha gave them back to her.

**S:** It was Indra, I think, actually. He gives in to his feelings at such times. *[Laughter]*

p.86

He is terrified by a harmless skeleton ...

**S:** That's quite a point. It's even a rational point. After all, what is the difference between the living body which you were so attracted to, and after which you really hankered, and that same body now that it's dead? "The spirit or consciousness has left it," you may say, "and it's that which makes all the difference." Well, if it was really the spirit or consciousness that you were interested in, why were you so preoccupied with the physical body? On the other hand, if it was the physical body that you were after, even when the spirit or consciousness was there, why aren't you interested in the physical body now that the spirit or consciousness has departed? It's a rather [215] horrible sort of paradox. If it's the spirit that you like, you shouldn't bother about the body (when the body is alive, that is), if it isn't the spirit you should be equally attracted by the body whether alive or dead.

**Subhuti:** Perhaps it's a combination of both that attracts you. *[Laughter]*

**S:** Perhaps it is, but then where does that leave you?

**Subhuti:** Well, it by-passes those arguments of Śāntideva! *[Laughter]*

**S:** That might lead you into an even more paradoxical situation. Why should something be attractive to you in combination and distasteful separately? It seems rather odd, because there's no change in the physical body at all - not immediately after death, anyway. In any case, you could imagine the spirit or consciousness still being somewhere around, so that the two things, the spirit or consciousness and the physical body, would still exist, even though not combined in the way that they had been. What, then, was the precise nature of the combination, if it was in fact that which attracted you?

**Vajradaka:** When two people are attracted to each other there is a kind of almost magnetic energy produced, so that when they touch each other there is a certain feeling, but you don't get that feeling with the dead person because the energy force comes from the life.

**S:** Do you mean the life, the consciousness, the mind? Something that's no longer there?

**Vajradaka:** Right.

**S:** Presumably, then, you could contact it during the lifetime of the physical body without touching that body. Presumably you could contact it directly.

**Vajradaka:** Yes, that too.

**S:** Even if you start off contacting it through the body you ought to end up being able to contact it directly, as it were, mind to mind. But of course that isn't usually what happens.

**Vajradaka:** No.

**S:** It also raises the question of rebirth, because the spirit or consciousness is then associated with different bodies. If you are in contact with someone only through the body, then, on the death of that body, you can remain in contact with them only by being in contact with their new body. But if the contact was mind to mind, or spirit to spirit, or consciousness to consciousness, you transcend all these considerations. Anyway, Śāntideva is just being deliberately difficult. He's trying to reverse our customary modes of thought and feeling and decondition us - though at the same time there is, no doubt, in certain contexts at least a lot of objective truth in what he says. Some people, of course, are not afraid of corpses. Perhaps if your *ĕloveí* hasn't been of a possessive and cloying nature you won't be put off by the sight of a corpse. I've seen quite a few corpses, having been called in on these occasions, and I can't say that I have ever really been put off by a corpse, except once, when it was in an advanced state of decomposition, which was a bit unpleasant; but normally there's nothing in it. It's not that the dead person looks as though they are asleep. No, they are not asleep, because they are not breathing; they are quite [216] still ....

**Dhruva:** My experience has been that I recognised the form, but not the person.

**S:** Also the person doesn't recognise you.

**Dhruva:** Yes, though in a completely different way. As you said, it wasn't as if they were asleep. One recognises someone who's asleep and feels something. With a corpse it may look physically as though it's asleep, but there is something that isn't there at all.

**S:** Several times I have had the definite experience of the person being present after their death. I've had this very strongly twice with people that some of us knew. One was Sumedha's mother. I had met her once or twice, and when she died I was invited to the house for the funeral. As I entered the sitting room I felt her at once, and though I hadn't been to the house before I knew at once which chair she usually occupied, because there she was sitting in it. The experience lasted several minutes, and it was definitely that she was saying hello and then after a while she went away. The same thing happened with Violet Wragg, who was the Secretary of the Brighton Buddhist Society, and whom I knew quite well. As soon as I entered the room, there was Violet sitting in her chair (I knew that it was her chair in this case) and she was saying hello and after a few minutes, as she usually did, she just went away. This was quite definitely what happened and I'm sure I wasn't imagining anything. On other occasions I've had more complicated experiences. These were both quite simple, straightforward ones. So when you are in contact with the physical body, you are not in contact with the person. When the dead body is there, you don't feel that that is the person. But when only the consciousness is there, that is the person. It's quite odd, but I'd say, on the basis of my experiences, that the person is not the combination: the person is the consciousness.

**Mary:** When my father died I remember feeling as if it was necessary to have good thoughts about him, and that those thoughts would somehow help him, as if he was conscious of them.

**S:** This is the principle of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The departed consciousness - to use that expression - can be helped by the positive thoughts of the living. When Terry Delamare died I not only felt him but could hear him quite literally calling me, and this went on for about two and a half days. In this case, the circumstances were rather special, as like his friend Terry eventually committed suicide. There was another friend whom I saw after death, and that was very odd indeed, but that's a long story, and I'll have to tell it some other time. The basic point here is that as far as one can identify a personality - and even that is not ultimately real according to Buddhism - it seems to be the consciousness and not the body. The consciousness uses the body, moulds the body, even creates the body (under *karma*), so that during life you are not really fused with the body. When you're in contact with another person, therefore, you're in contact with them to the extent that you're in contact with the consciousness, not with the body. If it was the body, then why is it, Śāntideva asks, that the body loses its attractiveness when the consciousness has departed? It can't be the body at all

that we want: really it's the mind, and we could say that the sooner we get to the mind-to-mind relationship the better. [217]

p.86                      Perhaps no other nonprimitive religion or philosophy  
has made so much of excrement as has Buddhism!

**S:** I'm not so sure about that. I didn't notice it particularly when I was in the East.

**Mike:** Perhaps he's confusing it with Hinduism, because a lot of Hindu ascetics besmear themselves with excrement, don't they?

**S:** No, not many. I don't think I've ever actually met one. There are some who smear themselves with ashes made of cowdung, but cowdung is quite a wholesome thing - quite pleasant-smelling even. But I never met an ascetic who smeared himself with human excrement, not one. I'm sure there are some who do, but they are definitely a small minority. Orthodox Hindus don't usually touch excrement at all, except for the cowdung, but that's quite a different matter. It's a nice colour, rather like a sort of ochre, and is used to plaster the floor. It also contains a small quantity of carbolic, so that it is a mild disinfectant. Tibetans, who live in a colder climate than the Hindus, with no germs, are less particular about touching human excrement, but I don't know of any Tibetans actually smearing it on themselves. No, I don't think Buddhism makes as much of excrement as Dr. Matics thinks.

p.86                      They are all completely loathsome to the  
Bodhisattva....

**Gotami:** I don't like that word 'loathsome'. It would seem that the Bodhisattva would just see them as they are: neither loathsome nor attractive.

**S:** Śāntideva goes into this in the next paragraph. He says it is a medicine for a certain disease. If you've got strong craving and attachment to the body, then this kind of reflection - seeing things in this different sort of way - can help you to overcome that. But in reality, for the Bodhisattva, it's neither loathsome nor anything else. He sees all bodily states and processes with complete equanimity. But if the would-be Bodhisattva, the aspiring Bodhisattva, happens to be attached to the physical body through strong craving, these reflections are likely to help him. Maybe in modern times we are in such a parlous state because we find it difficult to take these things literally, or in the way that they are intended. Sometimes, therefore, we are left without medicine, as it were, for our strong cravings and attachments.

**Subhuti:** Surely the best medicine is to see them for what they really are: not to see them as either loathsome or desirable, but to see them with detachment.

**S:** I don't know about that. Certainly the actual psychological/ emotional experience of disgust and loathing is not the ultimate state by any means. It's intended as an antidote, and you swing back, eventually, to a state of complete equanimity. But it's difficult to get to that as it were directly: the pendulum has to swing a bit first. Or it's like trying to straighten a bent bamboo. You bend it in the opposite direction for a while and then it gradually becomes straight.

**Gotami:** It works from the other side as well. If you really see what you've been doing for what it is, then an attitude of disgust does arise. You know, 'My God! Is that what I was really doing?' And then you don't want to touch it for a while.

**S:** Sometimes it's a bit difficult to be sure whether you are [218] seeing things as they are, or whether you're just putting it on a bit heavy in order to counteract your own previous one-sided state. The line of demarcation may differ with different people, but where one should be ending up is pretty clear. If you can end up in a state of equanimity, by whatsoever means, then you are all right. That is what really matters - not whether you have gone through the

rather terrifying exercises or not. None the less, there are some people who are very strongly attached, and they may have to go through some quite heavy experiences, - may have to practise exercises of this sort, - before they can wrench themselves away from the objects of their attachment and get into a state of genuine equanimity. After that they could, perhaps, allow themselves to have a modest contact with them, but before that it would be dangerous.

p.87

Śāntideva forces the really interesting question, why flesh is an object of passion. Why feel impelled to touch, embrace, and caress a covering of bones when that flesh-covering is without thought? And if one claims the motivation to be somehow psychic, that it is the *citta* which is sought, not the crude flesh. then the lover is all the more absurd, because clearly no one can touch the mind or anything psychic.

**S:** One often hears the lover saying, "Oh I really do love you! I really do admire your marvellous mind! It's your soul that I'm really after!" When it comes to the point it seems to be something quite different that they are after, and sometimes the poor beloved feels a bit upset by this, and even a bit exploited, as though what the lover had said was all just flowery talk.

**Gotami:** There's something I can't quite understand about bodily contact. It doesn't really matter with whom, but it seems that after a while, if I haven't touched a human body for a long time, there is a need to do that - even just to hold hands.

**S:** It may be connected with what Vajradaka was saying about magnetism. That may be the explanation. On the other hand, a child thrives more with bodily contact. An infant who is deprived of that just doesn't thrive, - this is quite definite, - and maybe it extends even into adult life - though some people seem to need much more contact than others, so far as I have observed. Some seem to be able to get along practically without it, quite healthily, but others seem to need rather a lot of it rather frequently.

**Gotami:** I don't really feel that it's an adolescent thing or a childish thing.

**S:** With a lot of people it has a mildly tonic effect. In India, for instance, they go in for a lot of massage. People seem to feel it as a necessity - it's almost a daily thing in some families. The younger women massage the legs of the older women, almost as a regular procedure. Indians are very much into this. It may be partly because their sex life is very strictly controlled - and people generally get their bodily contact in the course of their sex life, though the two things are really quite distinct. If your sex life is restricted you need more of the simple bodily contact, and so in India you get a lot of massage. Very often the barber, after trimming your hair, automatically gives you a massage round the back of the neck and the shoulders. There's also a lot of hand-holding among Indians - among Indian men, that is. [219] This is quite a normal, healthy thing, but in the West it has become a little suspect because here physical intimacy generally goes along with sex.

**Gotami:** I find it's very definitely different from that. It doesn't matter who it is, or what is happening, and massage is obviously a very good way of doing it.

**S:** It is different. That's why I think there is a need to separate the two things more. Sometimes, I'm quite sure, when people think that they want sex what they really want is just the bodily contact.

**Gotami:** What would you recommend, then?

**S:** I think that if this is so we have to cultivate the social customs, and the manners, which make bodily contact an easier and more accessible thing and less invariably connected with sex. I think sex just complicates the matter. People ought to be able to embrace one another,

and hold hands, and rub one another's backs, without the spectre of sex always rearing its ugly head - either in their own minds or in those of other people.

p.87 ...the variety of meditation which stresses the alleged loathsomeness of our physical nature generally is reserved in its most complete form for the special type of personality which may find it beneficial.

**S:** This is very germane to what we've been saying. "The variety of meditation which stresses the alleged loathsomeness of our physical nature generally is reserved in its most complete form for the special type of personality which may find it beneficial." There are many qualifications here, and I think they are quite rightly introduced.

p.87 ...all eventually come to the swallowing of the bitter pill....

**S:** Ah, but for many, when they come to that point of equanimity, it's no longer a bitter pill! It's just something they see the need for and quite happily accept.

p.87 ... the Buddhist laity cannot live for pleasure any more than Christians can live for sin.

**S:** The attitude of the average - relatively pious - Buddhist layman in the East is quite healthy. He says, "I recognise that there is a higher spiritual ideal. I recognise that the life of a monk is more advanced. I recognise that pleasures keep me down - but I'm not able to give them up yet." He doesn't "sin bravely" in quite the Lutheran manner, as Dr. Matics suggests. He simply says, "I'm not ready to give them up yet", and he enjoys them. He doesn't feel all neurotic and sinful about it, but he quite objectively recognises that some time or other he'll have to get round to giving them up - giving them up quite happily - and doing without them. He recognises that stage as coming sooner or later. Many laymen of course put it off to a future birth, or rebirth, but even so the general pattern is the same: "I'm not yet ready to give up worldly pleasures. I'm not feeling sinful and apologetic, but I do recognise that there are higher stages of the spiritual path, stages beyond the one that I'm on now, and I recognise and accept [220] that sooner or later I ought to be getting on to those stages." That's the attitude of the average pious layman - the so-called "born Buddhist" - in the East.

**Gotami:** If it's done in this kind of way, you could never go back to the stage you were in previously, because you just wouldn't want to ... The temptation would just cease.

**Gisela:** It's an organic growth, really - a natural process.

**S:** It's quite interesting to see the attitude of the monks also, especially in the Theravāda countries. The monks are quite definitely leading a stricter life, and doing without many things that the lay people enjoy, but there's no question of their looking down on "the wretched, miserable laity." On the contrary, their attitude towards them is very positive and friendly. They bless the lay people on certain occasions. They bless them that they may be prosperous, and have a happy worldly life - that they be happy with their wives, happy with their children. They don't minimise all that. At the same time they quite clearly say, "There is something beyond." But they don't try to exalt the spiritual by doing down the mundane in a nasty sort of way. That isn't done - not as a general practice, certainly. You may find the odd rather extreme writer who does it, but the general attitude isn't like that at all. The general attitude towards worldly life is that it is good, and that for the average person it can very often be a happy thing, something that he can enjoy - but that even he recognises that there's something more satisfying beyond. That's the general attitude. If anything goes wrong the monk will say sadly, with a little smile, "Well, what did you expect? After all, that was a worldly thing. You enjoyed it while it lasted, but you can't expect it to go on for ever. That's the nature of *samsāra*." In this way the lesson is quite gently pointed out.

p.87

After having renounced the tender lotus,  
radiant with the rays of the sun in a cloudless  
sky, what joy is there for the mind to be drunk  
with excrement in a cage of feces?

**S:** In other words, if your development is a process of real natural growth, you can't very easily fall back. You are more likely to be forced back if you are pushing and forcing yourself - then you fall back just by way of reaction. If you grow in a natural, opening up kind of way, you are much less likely to fall back - though of course you may fall back even so, but I think it much less likely.

**Vajradaka:** This whole section just seems to be a sort of pulling one away from the world.

**S:** Well, we are dealing with *dhyāna*, - that's the *pāramitā* that we are still concerned with, - and this does involve at least a temporary and partial literal getting away from the world, so that pulling away from the world is inevitable in connection with this whole subject of discussion, this whole practice. Admittedly the final detachment is in the mind, but it is difficult to detach the mind unless one is a bit detached physically, too, and unless physical conditions are a bit favourable to mental detachment. This is why we have retreats. Otherwise we wouldn't go to all that trouble. We could all sit at home and do it - but that's easier said than done. We know we can do it if we get half a chance, a decent retreat, a weekend away, or even a quiet evening at the Centre. [221]

p.89

He falls back upon the ancient Buddhist  
doctrine of *anātmavāda*, the teaching of  
no-self....

**Vajradaka:** Is it usual to put *ēvādaí* at the end of *anātmavāda*?

**S:** *ēVādaí* means doctrine or teaching or even something like our modern *ēismí*. *Anātmavāda* is the doctrine of no-self, Theravāda the doctrine of the *theras* or elder monks, *āchāryavāda* the doctrine of the *āchāryas* or learned teachers. It's quite a common sort of suffix. You also have Sarvastivāda, Mādhyamikavāda, Vijñānavāda, and so on. Generally it refers to a doctrine or teaching as formulated in a systematic, philosophical manner and upheld by a particular school.

p.89

Buddhism ... contains two ready-made areas of  
tension: a conflict of intention that exists between the  
claims of compassion and of renunciation ... and a  
comparable tension of technique ... between the  
experts in contemplation and their brothers who  
specialise in intellectual or intuitive wisdom.

**S:** This is quite important. As I pointed out some days ago, in the life of the modern missionary, Dharmaduta monk in the East there is quite often a sort of tension between the requirements of the monastic rule, literally interpreted, and the claims of his missionary activity. This broadly is what the author is referring to here: the conflict between the claims of compassion and renunciation. To renounce everything - to get away from the world, to live in isolation, to develop *dhyāna* - is very necessary, but what about other people, what about your wish to help them in whatever way you can? Sometimes there may be a conflict, at least a tension, of this sort - a conflict that is allegedly resolved, he says, in the doctrine of *sūnyatā* - a doctrine according to which wisdom and compassion, the two aspects of *sūnyatā*, eventually coalesce in the perfect Bodhisattva life. But until that perfect Bodhisattva life is achieved there is quite a bit of tension, even conflict. Similarly, in respect of vocations within the Sangha there is a sort of tension between the contemplative type of monk and the studious type. We find this in the Theravāda, especially where there are distinct terms for the ideals: *ganthadhura* and *vipassanādhura*. *ēDhuraí* means burden, so that there's the burden of study (literally, ebooks) and the burden of developing insight. In some Theravāda

communities a monk has virtually to make a choice at the beginning of his career. It's as though you can't combine the two vocations. You are either going to be a yogi monk and go into a cave - or into the forest - and contemplate, or you're going to be a studious monk and study the scriptures, and teach and expound and all the rest of it. Many, of course, do combine - or try to combine - both, but this means tension. In many parts of the Buddhist world, therefore, you get monks who've never meditated, even for half an hour, all their lives. There are lots of such monks - in other Buddhist countries too. On the other hand, in some areas you get yogis, and people who are very good at meditation, but who know very little indeed about the more doctrinal side of the teaching and certainly nothing about the historical development of Buddhism. There are a few monks who are thoroughly experienced in both fields, and they are usually very highly esteemed indeed - like one of my own teachers, Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche. He was famous both as a great yogi and as one of the greatest scholars in Tibetan [222] Buddhism in modern times. But that's fairly unusual. Generally, there is tension between meditation and study. For this reason I suggested, the other day, that one should devote specific phases of one's life to a particular type of activity, instead of trying to do a little of everything every day - maybe devoting a few months to study, with less meditation, and then having a lengthy meditation retreat and doing much less study. One should not try to maintain a balance all the time, in respect of each individual day. That is hardly possible, because you can't get deep enough into anything. No sooner have you got a bit into meditation than you have to come out of it and get on with your study, and just when you begin to get interested in your study it's time for meditation. That's no good. Phases are much better. One should therefore try to follow the rhythm of one's natural interest. As a matter of fact, I would say that there are three *eburdensí*, not two. There's practical activity, including physical work, or what is called *öorganisationalí* activity, i.e. activity for the benefit of other people in general; then there's study, including teaching and writing and discussion; and finally there is meditation. I think there should be phases in one's life when one or another of these definitely predominates, and when one is much more into that one thing.

p.89                      Even Ananda, great friend of the Buddha that he was, and almost incredibly learned, is said to have been excluded from the council of Arhats because he had not attained to Yogic contemplation.

**S:** Ananda seems to have been a bit of a scapegoat, both for the early Sangha, and also for Buddhist historians. There's some evidence to suggest that he might have been a rather early *ëMahāyānisticí* type of monk, or Buddhist - an interesting thought. At the time Yuan Chwang visited India, Ananda was regarded as the special patron of the nuns, the *bhikkhunis*, and it was his image they carried in procession, because it was at his intercession that *bhikkhunis* had been allowed to come into existence at all, and that again seems a bit *Mahāyānistic*. If it hadn't been for Ananda there wouldn't have been any *bhikkhunis*! From the point of view of some of the strict *ëelder monksí*, this was something to take him to task for; but of course the *bhikkhunis* themselves didn't think so: they carried his image in procession.

p.90                      The key to his emphasis,[on the moral implications of *Dhyāna*] is succinctly given in Śāntideva's first *Karika*: 'Since fear and sorrow are pleasing neither to me nor to another, what, then, is the distinction of the self that I protect it and not another?'

**S:** This is the point that eventually comes out. The general feeling in Buddhist countries, or among Buddhists, is that people are equal in respect of suffering: that everybody is equally susceptible to suffering. A dog can suffer, just as a human being can. In respect of suffering, the dog is the equal of the human being. One should therefore be as considerate to a dog as one is to a human being, and not be unkind to it, not maltreat it. Śāntideva however goes further than this. He argues that if we all suffer equally, - if we are all equally sensitive to suffering, - there is no objective reason why I should be more concerned about my own suffering than about somebody [223] else's. I should look equally upon the sufferings of all,

and try to relieve them all equally - not just concentrate on the relief of my own suffering. This of course links up with the Buddhist teaching of the non-reality, in the ultimate sense, of the separate, individual self. You regard your own suffering as being of particular importance, rather than that of others, only because the illusion of *ĕself* is there. Once that is gone, or weakened, you begin to see that you ought just as well to devote yourself to relieving the sufferings of others as to relieving your own suffering. I think this sort of objectivity is something that the mature person tends to develop to some extent anyway - even though not to the extent that Śāntideva or the Bodhisattva develop it, or suggest it should be developed. We do feel somewhat sympathetic when others are suffering, and give the matter at least some attention, even though, if it came to a real decision, you'd probably prefer the relief of your own suffering to the relief of somebody else's. Nevertheless, one is able to see what Śāntideva is getting at. In a way, it's a question of imagination. Very often we can't really imagine, - can't really feel, that somebody else is feeling just what we would feel under similar circumstances. But if you are able to feel it, are able to imagine it vividly, you are much more likely to empathise with that person and act to relieve his or her suffering just as you would act to relieve your own. You feel that suffering in a way as yours. The classic example is, of course, that of mother and child - only you should be able to extend the kind of concern that a mother has for her child to everybody.

p.91                      The cause of this cosmic sorrow is attachment to the self (*Ātma-sneha*) ...

**S:** One could also say self-love. Sneha is literally *ĕlove*.

... ĩall sorrows, without distinction, are ownerless.Ĥ

**S:** That is, are not anybody's in particular. So there's no question of my sorrow or your sorrow. There's just sorrow that we all ought to be doing our best to remove, without distinguishing my sorrow from your sorrow. Here of course Śāntideva - in a way typically - is being intensely metaphysical. But I think that it perhaps isn't necessary, at least not in this country, where people aren't very metaphysically inclined, to argue ourselves into that state of mind with rather highly metaphysical arguments. Rather is it a question of a sensitivity that develops alongside our spiritual practice. As a result of such practice we do become much more sensitive and much more aware, generally; much more sensitive with regard to other people, much more responsive to their sorrows and troubles, and less and less preoccupied with our own individual miseries. I think this can be expected to happen quite naturally, and probably we don't require these rather abstruse metaphysical arguments to *ĕconvince* us that sorrows are ownerless, etc. It is a sort of instinct, so to speak, that most people develop as a result of their spiritual practice - their heightened sensitivity and broader imagination. Some people seem to be born with this instinct. It's strange, but you can sometimes see it even in children. Some seem almost naturally to feel the sufferings of others, and to sympathise with them and try to do something about them, whereas others seem relatively impervious. It's as though people start off on different levels in this respect, as far as one can see. [224]

**Mary:** Is it possible there are kind of *ĕclouds* of sufferingĤ that float about and that one might happen into one? Clouds that were separate from oneself?

**S:** Yes, I think so. Maybe that isn't literally what happens, but certainly one's experience is sometimes like that. It's as though somewhere or other someone, or some beings, have as it were discharged or sent forth a whole mass of really suffering vibrations, and that these are floating around and you pick them up. Yes, I'm quite sure of this. I don't know whether this is in fact what happens, in the literal sense, but certainly the experience is very much like that.

**Vajradaka:** They built a toilet on a ley line in Crouch End and it has a really strange feeling. [*Laughter*] It's got so much pain in there it's really awful, much more than any other place. If you're at all sensitive it really hurts.

**S:** That's very odd.

**Gotami:** I sometimes feel there's big, thick and dense clouds of it hanging over cities.

**S:** Over cities, presumably, just because there are more humans congregated there.

**Mary:** It seems quite unrelated to one's own particular reactions.

**S:** Yes, it is very much like walking into a cloud. You do feel unhappy - or feel unhappiness - but there's nothing in your own life, your own situation, as far as you can see, that's responsible for that. There's not even anything coming up from the unconscious. It seems definitely to be coming from outside, and sort of floating in - or you get into it.

**Gotami:** Sometimes it gets very, very thick and heavy, and everybody you meet starts going through painful experiences and things like that, and so you feel it lighten, and then gradually, over the next week, everyone comes into a solid state. The only way that I could explain the feeling that arose is that it's like a big heavy cloud which just gets thicker at times. It's very difficult to put up any resistance to it.

**S:** I was aware of this very much when I was down in Cornwall [at the beginning of the year]. It went on for about three months, from shortly after my arrival, and at first I really wondered what was happening. But then it could be seen in the way that Mary describes, as a cloud, and a lot of it seemed to be quite definitely coming from the Order members, as it were collectively. It took about three months, I think, to work through. There are still bits and pieces of it around, but it seems largely to have gone now.

**Gotami:** You had a cloud?

**S:** I could feel it, and sometimes I could feel the direction it was coming from - the direction of space. But it was coming from outside - that is, the actual experience, and I did eventually come to the conclusion that this represented the actual facts of the case.

**Gotami:** Just because it comes from outside, it does sound as if it might be possible to do something about it.

**S:** Oh yes, indeed you can do something, though here it is a question of direct mind action - maybe supported by other things, but [225] primarily of mind action. Sometimes you have to take things in and absorb them, as it were, and get through them that way: but that might be very uncomfortable for you.

**Vajradaka:** I think there are certain times of day which are clearer of this cloud than others. I've noticed that at about 4 o'clock on Hampstead Heath. During the day, the cloud seems to cover the Heath to some degree, but at night, the Heath seems to clear itself in some way. Sometimes when I myself felt very clogged and cloudy, I just had to go up on the Heath at night and it was a great help.

**S:** I also noticed, after going to the chalet in Cornwall, that on the rare occasions when I ventured into Plymouth I was very aware of the atmosphere. This sort of thing had been going on even in London, to some extent - even at Muswell Hill, though of course it was a bit blurred then, because I was living there all the time. Consequently there was nothing with which I could compare my experience in Plymouth. In places like stores and supermarkets, especially, there was such an odd atmosphere of sort of heavy greed. Not active, grasping greed, but heavy, dull, almost reptilian greed. It was quite definitely like a thick, heavy cloud. You could almost walk through it: you could almost cut it with a knife, as the saying goes, especially in the sort of places I've mentioned: it was really dull and heavy. It was once symbolised for me by something that happened as I was coming out of the Sainsbury's at Muswell Hill. There was a great queue of shoppers. I'd just done some shopping, and in front of me there was a very stout, dull, elderly woman. We stood there for about ten minutes, waiting to be checked out, and all the time her dull, slightly glazed eyes were fixed on a box of chocolates - you know, the things they keep in racks on the left hand side to tempt you as

you go out. When her turn came to be checked out, her hand very slowly went out and grasped the chocolates. The atmosphere of the stores in Plymouth was just like that. It was the same dull, heavy greed - not the active grasping greed, but something really stagnant, and really very strange. Afterwards I stopped going to such places for a while. The atmosphere there was very, very heavy indeed. So the vapour that hangs over big cities is the cloud of greed, the cloud of sorrow - and you can get other clouds too, as in wartime you get clouds of hatred and aggression, and notice the fact. When you are part and parcel of the cloud, of course, you don't notice its presence: you are sharing in it: but when you are more aware, and as if it were separate from it, you experience it much more.

**Mike:** I remember coming back from a Summer retreat once, and going into a laundrette. By mistake I picked up the wrong packet of washing powder, and I'd no sooner touched it than the woman sitting next to me jumped up with an "Ah!" in a state of absolute panic. I just dropped the packet! *[Laughter]* I couldn't believe that that kind of reaction had taken place. It really was so extreme.

**Gisela:** What can one do about it? I felt it recently just going into a hospital to listen to a talk, and I came out feeling really sick. I had a headache, and I felt just completely sick for several hours.

**Aśvajit:** I noticed this in Gisela when she came back. She was completely transformed. It was really unpleasant.

**S:** It's a bit of a problem, in a way. I stopped going into shops, so Mark was going and doing everything. After a few months he started feeling the same sort of thing, so it became quite difficult. This can [226] happen to anybody living quietly in the country, doing some meditation, and not meeting people. You really do have to cut down on the shopping days, or go just to certain places which are quieter, and where the atmosphere is not so heavy, even if it means driving a little further on. Plymouth seemed to be a particularly bad place in this respect, I don't know why. Perhaps it's all that modern development.

While we are on the subject of "heaviness" in the atmosphere, one of the questions that people sometimes ask is whether we tend to feel duller and more sluggish at certain times of the day than at others, and whether therefore it would be better not to meditate at such times. There is no need to be too precious about this of course, and in any case the experienced meditator should be able to meditate at any time, but generally it's not good to meditate in the afternoon. According to the Ayurveda, the Indian "Science of Life", the psycho-physical energies are in the ascendant from dawn up to midday, but from the late morning onwards they are in decline until the evening. If you try to meditate in the afternoon, therefore, you're going against the current. It's not just a question of having food in the stomach. I've noticed this on retreats. From 1 o'clock till about 3 is definitely the most sluggish time, regardless of what the eating arrangements are.

**Gisela:** In fact modern medicine says that too: that between 1 and 3 particularly it is the lowest time for the body and that one should rest, really, rather than do anything.

**Subhuti:** I've noticed that quite strongly myself with my own energies. The best meditation is the first one in the morning, particularly if it's a long one and can build up. In the afternoon it's hopeless, and then at about 5 o'clock it really starts to pick up again.

**S:** I also think that from 12 midnight till 2 o'clock in the early morning are hours of lower vitality. Isn't that the time when the majority of old people die, or at least a higher percentage of them?

**Mike:** I wonder what effect the weather has on meditation too. Relating this to the question of dying, apparently a lot of people die when it rains, more so than if the weather is really fine. A lot of people die in the winter too.

**S:** In the case of winter it may be due to lower vitality, less resistance, and so on. But rain, that's quite odd. Rain is somewhat depressing for some people, I don't know why. Maybe it's a question of magnetism and of the particular degree of atmospheric pressure. Anyway, I hope we've got our facts right to begin with, and that people do actually tend to die in the early hours of the morning!

**Mike:** As regards rain, a friend of mine used to work in a cemetery in Kensington. He used to say that if there was a spell of really good weather there'd be no work to do, but that when there were suddenly two or three days of rain they'd be inundated with work and have so many graves to dig for the people who'd died when it was raining.

**S:** Sunshine of course is vitalizing. You could say that the rain is screening it off from you, and having a negative effect in that way.

**Dhruva:** In Cornwall I found that some days would start off bright, and I felt bright: but then suddenly I'd become aware that I was feeling very heavy, and I'd notice that it was overcast. Then when the sun came out I felt myself pick up again.[227]

**S:** There are other factors, too, like nutrition. Then what about the ancient Greeks? They're a good example. They were an active, intelligent people, and happy so far as one knows, and they lived in a nice sunny climate!

**Mary:** There are also the different cycles, aren't there, such as those of the moon - the lunation cycles? If the low points of three different cycles coincide, that's apparently a bad time.

**S:** About a year ago I met a woman who was doing a systematic study of lunar influences on trees, plants, metals, wood (the wood used in building), human beings, and so on - everything. She said that some of the results she'd already arrived at were quite amazing, and that the moon had a very definite effect on all these things.

**Gisela:** I have sometimes thought the same thing in relation to people. For instance, people are affected where everything is relatively mild and where there are really no great extremes as between winter and summer and so on. In such places the people are mild too, and don't seem to go to extremes. But take a country like Russia, which has extremely hard winters and beautifully warm summers, - where you really have extremes: the people are much more extreme too. This is what I've sometimes thought, though I don't know whether it's quite relevant here.

**S:** On my way back from India in 1967 I spent five days in Cairo with an Indian friend. Naturally I went out and about a bit, and I noticed how smoothly flowing everything was compared with India. Motor cars seemed to go along not very quickly, though there was a smooth flow of traffic, and people walked slowly and smoothly in the streets - mostly men: you saw very few women around. There was nothing in the least hurried or jerky about their movements. There seemed to be a great deal of psychological stability. I discussed this with the friend with whom I was staying, who was very much into Indian philosophy and yoga, and he said that he'd noticed it too. In his opinion it had something to do with the regularity with which, for centuries, the Nile had functioned. In India, he said, people were always anxious about the rains, as there are great variations from year to year. Sometimes the rains come on time, and fall in sufficient quantity, and you get good crops, and sometimes they don't. In Egypt the situation was quite different. The Nile always rises at the right time; there's always enough water, always enough food - you don't have to worry about that. In his opinion this had had a definite effect on the whole national character. But I certainly noticed this calmness, this smooth way in which everything flowed, and in fact was quite surprised, because what one read in the newspapers, even at the time, would not have led one to expect it. It was quite remarkable. The whole of life seemed a nice, smooth flow there - even the traffic. For instance, when you crossed the road the traffic would come to a halt smoothly and gently and let you cross. No one had to brake suddenly or anything like that. It was all very

smooth. Moreover there didn't seem to be much noise, certainly not compared with India. Even in the streets it was quiet.

**Aśvajit:** I think I noticed something of this kind in Prague, where of course they have a very strong, steady-flowing river.

**S:** India too has strong-flowing rivers, but they change their course every year and whole villages are washed away. There's also a Penguin book I have on the seasons. It's a detailed study of the [228] seasonal rhythm of life and it's very interesting indeed. It really does illustrate how the law of cycles is at work in nature and in human life in so many different ways. Apparently the seasons are not such a straightforward or limited business as we suppose. On certain levels of existence the principle of cyclical change, of seasonal alternation, is all-pervasive, and operates in a number of different ways. This very well illustrates the Buddhist conception of the cyclical type of conditionality, the conception of the *samsāra* as a beginningless succession of recurrent phases. When we are trying to make our way through these phases and to maintain a constant rate of progress in terms of the spiral type of conditionality, we can sometimes take advantage of a particular point in one of these phases. When we are meditating, for instance, and trying to develop a positive mental state, there are some parts of the quotidian cycle, say, which are more favourable to such a development than others, and so we cunningly take advantage of them. We make the *samsāra* work against itself. We attack it at its weaker points. I mean, in the case of meditation you are trying to get on to the spiral, but there are certain times of the day which are more favourable to this than others, and so you save your energy for those times when the *samsāra* is a little less unhelpful. Thus you work when your natural energy cycle is at its peak, not when it's at its lowest. A wise Buddhist looks into these things a little, at least so far as his own experience is concerned. In a way it's a question of going with nature rather than directly against her. In a way it's against, of course, but you mustn't let nature know that!

**Subhuti:** You still have to understand these things, because if you're not aware of them being at work then you may misinterpret them and see them as something other than what they are - something psychological or whatever.

**S:** Yes, that is so. There is very definitely a lower level of vitality in the afternoon. It's not due to having eaten or anything like that, and it seems to be the least favourable time for meditation. This is why on retreats we used to have discussion then, but even that doesn't keep some people awake! Maybe we ought to have a compulsory afternoon siesta - like they do in a kindergarten - and get up earlier in the morning for meditation!

p.92                      ñNameless are all the conditions, but illuminated by  
name ...î

**S:** This is the essence of the whole passage from the lost *Lokanāthavyākaraṇa-sūtra*, ěSūtra of the Elucidation of the Lord of the Worldí, quoted in the *Śikṣā-samuccaya* and taken from there by Dr. Matics: ñNameless are all conditions, but illuminated by name.í Names are useful for certain practical purposes, but no ultimate validity attaches to them. This is all that is really being said. Perhaps we shouldn't allow Śāntideva, or rather his sources, to be too metaphysical. The Indians were rather fond of the metaphysical mode and we are not too fond of it in this country, - whether rightly or wrongly, - and the Chinese weren't particularly fond of it either. They tended to put things in a rather practical, earthy way. Probably that's what will happen here.

**Gotami:** I don't think that that's metaphysical. It's practical, the way things are. I mean things haven't got names, but one uses names in order to live.[229]

**S:** Yes, that is the gist of the matter. But if you say, ñVoid are conditions and namelessí, as the passage quoted does at the beginning, it does become somewhat metaphysical, because this isn't the sort of idiom to which we are accustomed. If you were giving a talk to a group of people who hadn't heard much about Buddhism, you wouldn't speak in terms of the

emptiness of names, or anything like that. If you mentioned the matter at all, you would say, "Things like names have their practical uses, but don't take them too seriously."

pp.92-93

Between Ratnacitra and Ratnottama there is no more difference than between Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and that a false and perverse *ilī* claims one name or another has no bearing on the problem in any real sense. Facing a choice between self-protection and protection of another, there can be discerned no unique quality (*viśeṣa*) which can be asserted of the *īselfī* in such a way that the interests of this *īselfī* must be respected in preference to the interests of another. A choice may and must be made, of course, but it will not be in the interest of *īselfī*: That choice must be decided by absolute preference for the other. It is in the interests of Dharma - of becoming a Bodhisattva, which is not self-interest, but self-emptying - that the other is to be preferred so drastically. Otherwise, since the other and the *īselfī* are by definition equal, there would be no basis at all for the choice.

**S:** It's a little bit like the position with regard to contemplating the loathsomeness of certain things. It's not that things are really either loathsome or attractive: they are just as they are. But for the practical purpose of getting rid of your craving you concentrate on that loathsome or repulsive aspect, because this is helpful. In the same way, when both you and other beings are suffering, since there's no absolute self there's no reason why you should help one rather than another, - no reason why you should prefer yourself to him, or him to yourself; but the fact is you do have the illusion of self (that's your natural tendency), and in order to counteract that, whenever you have to make a choice you choose his welfare rather than yours. Thus you eradicate your own natural egoity and attachment. That's an integral part of the Bodhisattva ideal. It helps you get rid of your false sense of self. Of course Śāntideva is being really extreme here, but one can see the sense of it.

pp.93-94

The fundamental reason that sorrow is to be prevented is simply that sorrow is unpleasant, and everyone agrees that this is so; but since there is no differentiation between either selves or sorrow, all sorrows are to be extinguished, just as all selves are to be extinguished.... But the point of attack... is the sorrow of the other. On the level of *parātma-samatā*, we are to be our brother's keeper to the maximum degree, and the sacrifice of martyrdom, which is easy for a Christian in that he only has to die once, may be demanded of the Bodhisattva again and again in countless incarnations.

**S:** In this passage Śāntideva is looking at the ideal of the Bodhisattva from a slightly different point of view. Going back to what Mary was saying a short while ago, it's as though the Bodhisattva [230] sees this enormous cloud of suffering, which is the suffering of all (perhaps even including his own), and he can't go on sitting there happily while it is, at least, impinging on him. It isn't his suffering. In a way he doesn't feel it; but also, in a way, he does. There's a line in Tennyson which says, "A painless sympathy with pain." It's rather like that. He can't be completely happy, or completely undisturbed by suffering, so long as that cloud is there; so even in his own interest, - his own interest in the long run, - he works on that cloud. Most of that cloud is emitted by other people (maybe just a bit of it by him), but in order to get rid of any egoistic feelings he may have he works on that part of the cloud which belongs to other people, not on that part of it which belongs to himself. In this way, with the

help of many Bodhisattvas, the cloud is eventually dissolved. Thereís no question of the Bodhisattva being able to sit somewhere and never be touched by that cloud. Thereís a passage in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* where Avalokitesvara, on the threshold of Enlightenment, hears in the distance a confused medley of sounds and cries. He turns round and listens, and itís the cries of all the beings who are suffering in the world. Moved by compassion, he turns his back, as it were, on Nirvāna, and remaining on the éplateauí - as Dr. Matics calls it - between the conditioned and the Unconditioned, *samsāra* and Nirvāna, continues to work on that cloud, the cloud of suffering. If all sentient beings are interconnected, then existence is like a vast spiderís web. You canít really sit comfortably in your own little corner if, on the other side of the universe, someone else is a bit uncomfortable in theirs. A little tremor will come along the filaments, and that will, in a way, disturb you. Not that it will disturb you in the usual way, of course, but because you can feel it your peace and tranquillity will not be absolutely complete. Even in your own interest, therefore, - your own interest narrowly considered, - you have to work on that cloud and help others. This is very much the general Mahāyāna attitude. Strictly speaking, thereís no such thing as individual liberation, individual happiness: you either all have it together, or you donít have it at all. You can say that youíre fairly happy, fairly contented, but you canít say that youíre completely happy until everyoneís happy.

**Subhuti:** Because the process of becoming sort of individually happier is also one of becoming more sensitive, and so you canít escape.

**S:** Right. The more sensitive you become, the more open you are to other peopleís feelings, other peopleís sufferings. Paradoxically, if you go off to a cave and meditate, you become even more sensitive to the suffering of others, and feel like doing something about it. Either you come back into the world, therefore, or, if you are able, you do something on a purely mental level, - telepathically, as it were, - even if itís just carrying on with your own meditation so powerfully that the meditation itself becomes a cloud - a positive cloud - acting on that negative cloud.

**Aśvajit:** Milarepaís practice!

**S:** Yes, indeed. In a number of different spiritual traditions there are legends that the world continues in existence only because, in different parts of the world, there are seven or eight sages just carrying on with their meditations. Otherwise the world would have come to an end in a catastrophic manner. The Sufis have legends of this [231] sort, and so does the Greek Orthodox Church. Whenever things get really bad, the masters say, ëCome on, up into the mountains! Meditate like mad, otherwise we wonít get through this crisis.í Thereís a great deal of truth in this - well, more than a great deal: itís literally true, and in fact, follows logically as soon as you admit the interconnectedness of all forms of life - and that seems to be demonstrated quite scientifically. If little plants can feel an unkind thought and wilt, then what about human beings?

**Subhuti:** I remember the Pope talking about the contemplative orders and saying that they in fact kept the whole Catholic Church going, by their own practice.

**S:** Itís the same kind of idea. Of course if they are really contemplative they might be undermining it too, in a way! [*Laughter*] Thatís why the Catholic Church has always kept a very sharp eye on the contemplatives and why it sometimes discourages them and has them out of the monasteries doing something really useful. But at least they recognise that there is a power there.

p.94

Thus they plunge into the worst Hell like wild geese  
into the lotus pond.

**S:** Legends like that of the Bodhisattva Ksitigarbhaís descending into hell represent this sort of occurrence, when a Bodhisattva-like being deliberately goes into the cloud, even into the heart of the cloud. Heís not afraid. He knows it wonít harm him. If anything, he can melt that

cloud, at least a little bit, just by being in the midst of it - but obviously that isn't something that everybody can do. Maybe there are very few Bodhisattvas, even, who can make the descent into hell, who can venture to go right in the cloud and even live in the midst of the cloud, quite deliberately.

**Gotami:** Do you feel that people normally are aware of their own limits in this way?

**S:** Sometimes, not always. Sometimes they underestimate and sometimes they overestimate. You have to strike a balance. For instance, take the case of people living in the city: there is a cloud there to a great extent. When you yourself are part and parcel of the cloud, and contributing to it, you hardly notice, but when you go off, say, for a retreat, then you're out of the cloud and you really feel free. On going back to the city you notice the difference. After a few days, perhaps, you are for all practical purposes absorbed by the cloud - maybe not when you are actually meditating, but certainly when you are moving around. For the first two or three days, even, you can move around and not be affected, or not very much: there's still something of the retreat with you: but after that you really do need to get away regularly. This however increases your sensitivity, so that when you come back into the cloud you feel it still more. You then just have to estimate your own strength, and what you need to do every day just to keep a bit out of the cloud, or your head a bit above it, as it were. Of course you can have a little retreat-like oasis in the midst of the cloud - if, say, you've got a little community, and if you keep up regular *pūjā* and meditation and so on. There can be little holes in the cloud, but they are not easy to maintain, because sometimes, if [232] you leave the door too wide open, little bits of cloud will drift in even into your little oasis.

p.94                      When a being has been released, an ocean of joy has arisen for everyone, since pleasure (as well as pain) is without discrimination.

**S:** This is a bit like the transference of merit. When someone gains spiritual emancipation, it affects everybody: it's as though he creates a cloud. Interestingly enough, the tenth and last stage of the Bodhisattva's career is called Dharmamegha, 'Cloud of the Dharma', so that it could be interpreted in this way (usually it isn't) - as if it brings into existence a great cloud of spiritual substance, almost, which affects everybody to some extent. Just as you can have clouds of sorrow drifting around, you can have clouds of joy drifting around too, generated by Bodhisattva-like people.

p.95                      [Śāntideva's] stress is fervently moral, rather than transic, and it is carefully integrated into the overall pattern of the Bodhisattva's character and career.

**Vajradaka:** What does *ētransicī* mean?

**S:** *ēTransicī* means pertaining to or connected with trance, which is the editor's word, following Dr. Conze, for *dhyāna*: not a very happy word. Here it means pertaining to the *dhyānas*. Dr. Conze always uses *ētranceī* for both *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. This is one of his least fortunate translations. But Dr. Matics mentions the Brahma-Vihāras. Does anyone want to ask anything about them?

**Vajradaka:** I was just wondering whether I was under an illusion when I felt that the Brahma Vihāras were, in just a very ordinary sort of way, permeating into my life. I wondered whether they were specifically very high, metaphysical spiritual states, or whether they could, and actually do, just sort of filter into one's everyday life and whether one should actually feel them.

**S:** It's a question of degree. Certainly if one practises them, and especially if one does them as a definite exercise, it is to be expected not only that you should feel them at the time of meditation but also that something of them should percolate through at other times as well. This is what should happen with *maitri* especially, that being the really basic Brahma Vihāra.

**Mike:** Until this retreat it never occurred to me to categorise any of my own experiences in terms of such high spiritual attainments as the Brahma Vihāras and the four *dhyānas*. To what extent can one do this?

**S:** Sooner or later it all ought to tie up, that's certain. There are also many different levels. You can have a full-blown experience of the Brahma Vihāras, with feelings of overflowing love and compassion for all, and you can also have feelings of strong goodwill in the ordinary human sense, - that's also *maitri*, - and work on that comparatively lower, though still very worthwhile, level. Even if one were to think in terms of the Brahma Vihāra-type experience percolating down, as it were, and of oneself as beginning to be in touch with it in that way, one wouldn't be wrong. Certainly, the Brahma Vihāras are very [233] lofty experiences, but it's not that there's just one level. There's a whole series of levels - right down to one's ordinary human feelings of goodwill and kindness towards others. They are the link, - the bridge, if you like, - and it is to be expected that, if one has practised the *mettā-bhāvanā* meditation, it should make some difference to one's ordinary outlook on life, as well as to one's behaviour with, and attitude towards, other people. You should be just a bit more friendly, a bit more kindly. If you're not, it's a bit surprising. You don't keep it all shut up in the meditation hour.

**Mike:** I was wondering, though, if the use of Sanskrit terms for these higher attainments might inhibit people relating their own experience to them. This is something I've just discovered in myself. Perhaps it would be useful to have a set of terms which one could use - and identify with - more easily.

**S:** I think such terms will develop, because if sufficient people need them they will come into use. This will happen naturally as we try to talk about our experience in plain, straightforward terms. There will be a few scholars around to tell us what it all is in Pali and Sanskrit, so as to link up properly with tradition, which is also necessary, but not everybody needs to know what the terms for certain experiences are in those languages. In some Buddhist countries in the East, such as Ceylon, the situation is easier. Pali words like *mettā* have become part of the Sinhalese language, so that Sinhalese-speaking people can use words like *mettā* in a quite natural way. They can say, "Oh I feel a lot of *mettā* for that person." It isn't a jarring word from another language: it's part of their own language. In this way the word develops all sorts of nuances, even social nuances, in addition to the full-fledged religious or spiritual meaning. This is the sort of thing that can happen. We too may absorb some Pali and Sanskrit words. Friendliness is quite a good word: maybe we should take that up and promote it: give it a capital 'F' in the same way that we have Friends i.e. 'members' of the FWBO with a capital F. We should speak of a Friendly attitude, with a capital 'F': "You're not being very Friendly today." You can hear the capital.

**Gotami:** There does seem to be one slight danger, which some people fall into when they come to relate their own experience to the words in the books: they may collect a label for what they experience, but they may think that because they can label their own tiny little touch, or spark, of a feeling they are way beyond the point at which they actually are. I think this should be taken into consideration too, because people can then sometimes have a very inflated idea of where they are on the path and go around thinking they are Enlightened.

**Mike:** Well, that's the other extreme.

**S:** We tend not to encounter that, though, on the whole. We don't seem to have had many inflated people around. I've certainly seen them in other groups, but not in the "Friends".

**Gotami:** When it does happen, it's pretty inflexible.

**S:** Oh yes! I've heard Burmese Buddhists say, "My *mettā*? My *mettā* is very good!", in just that sort of way.

**Vajradaka:** Long before I came to the ðFriendsí, I once really believed that I was Enlightened, and it was really useful to me, because [234] after six weeks I really wanted to talk to people, and listen to music, and then I realised I wasnít! [*Laughter*] But for six weeks, anyway (I was in the jungle), I thought I was, and then, when I realised I wasnít, - that I was nowhere near it, - it was quite a good thing and quite useful.

**S:** The danger is that, during that six-week period, you start collecting disciples - disciples who tell you that you are Enlightened, and who need to believe that you are. Itís then rather difficult, because they wonít let you get out of it. Theyíll say, ðOh no, you are Enlightened, donít think that you are not: you are mistaken! We KNOW!í

p.95

The Mādhyamika, in particular, is especially reluctant to speak of the X-factor that remains after phenomenality is dispersed, and it shies away from an Absolute even more vigorously than other Buddhist schools. Yet Nagarjuna himself is able to say ðOf the essential non-difference between the Buddhas and all beings, of oneself and others, is the Equality (*samatā*) taught by you.í This can lead us in three directions (perhaps - although not necessarily all at once) away from the subject in hand. Such an attitude can bring us to believe in a Vijñānavadin-type Absolute (the cosmic *citta*), or to the Mādhyamika belief that *saṃsāra* and Nirvāna are identical (which identity transcends all conceptions of *citta*), or, perhaps, even to a third view which no Buddhist would accept: the quasi-cosmic man.

**Vajradaka:** Ím confused! [*Laughter*]

**Mary:** I didnít get it ... itís just words ...

**S:** No, Itís not just words. It has a meaning, actually. Letís go back to, ðNagarjuna himself is able to say, ðOf the essential non- difference between the Buddhas and all beings, of oneself and others, is the Equality (*samatā*) taught by you.í He starts off with the fact of oneself and others being equal: there are no ðselvesí; thereís just [impersonal] suffering, or else [impersonal] joy. The whole idea of selfhood - of ðyouí and ðmeí - is illusion or delusion. We may speak of Enlightened selves and un-Enlightened selves, but if you follow the implications of the *parātma-samatā* and the Brahma Vihāras to their logical conclusion, the Enlightened selves are really all one and the same: ordinary beings are the same as Buddhas, Buddhas are the same as ordinary beings. Nagarjuna explicitly says this: ðOf the essential non-difference between Buddhas and all beings, of oneself and others, is the Equality (*samatā*) taught by you.í According to Dr. Matics, ðThis can lead us in three directions (perhaps - although not necessarily all at once) away from the subject at hand. Such an attitude,í i.e. the attitude that self and Buddhas are the same, or that ordinary beings and Buddhas are the same, can lead in the direction of, for instance, ða Vijñānavadin-type Absolute (the cosmic *citta*)í, that is to say, can lead to the belief that there is just one mind - to the belief that what we regard as selves, or beings, or Buddhas, are all different expressions of one mind, - that there is one cosmic mind underlying everything, manifesting in everything, - and that itís this One Cosmic Mind that you have to realise. That is in fact [235] Enlightenment; that is in fact Enlightenment; that is in fact Buddhahood. This is the teaching of the Vijñānavāda or, more correctly, of the Yogācāra school The Mādhyamika goes, in a way, even beyond that. The Mādhyamika says that if beings and Buddhas are identical, then the conditioned and the Unconditioned, *saṃsāra* and Nirvāna, are all non-dual. That non-duality is the supreme Voidness which is beyond even Chitta, beyond even the Cosmic Mind, and itís in the realisation of that that Enlightenment consists.

Or, you can go in another direction, to a view which according to Dr. Matics is not very Buddhistic, though I don't altogether agree with that. Here too there is no such thing as *ëyouf* and *ëmeí*, *ëselvesí* or *ëbeingsí* and *ëBuddhasí*, but here it's not even a question of just one Mind, or one Void. For this view, ultimately it's one person - an all-knowing, omnipresent person - manifesting in all these beings. In fact the whole universe is one *ëpersoní*. Dr. Matics is of course thinking of early Indian beliefs such as that of the cosmic Purusha, the archetypal man, whose dismemberment resulted in the creation of the universe, and he therefore goes on to suggest that perhaps behind the Buddhist teaching of the non-difference of beings and Buddhas *ëwe* detect this cosmic gentleman lurking ... and we retreat in confusion. The confusion is due to the fact that the *ëcosmic gentlemaní* bears some resemblance to God, and Buddhists aren't supposed to believe in God. Dr. Matics is making a little scholarly joke here, in case you haven't noticed. [*Laughter*] But actually you can - and in some places the Mahāyāna does - think of the whole of existence as one great Buddha, of whom the different Bodhisattvas are manifestations on one level, and ordinary people manifestations on another level. The Tendai School follows this line of thought to some extent, as do some forms of Tantra, especially the Japanese Shingon School. Earth, water, fire and air are the manifestations, on their own particular level, of this or that Buddha. Everything is interconnected. The entire universe is the *ëbodyí* of one gigantic Buddha. Thus one can see that the idea of the Cosmic Person, who is the Buddha, is not quite so un-Buddhistic as Dr. Matics seems to think, though admittedly it is on the fringes of Buddhism, metaphysically speaking.

From the fact that beings and Buddhas are identical - because self and others are identical ultimately - you can therefore proceed in these three different directions - perhaps even at the same time. You can think in terms of the One Cosmic Mind embracing everything: or of the Void which is beyond everything, and which Buddhas and ordinary people equally are; or you can think in terms of a Cosmic Person, omniscient and omnipresent. This last is what Buddhists would call a Buddha. It isn't God, because according to Buddhism he doesn't create the universe. As we have seen, Dr. Matics thinks this line of thought rather un-Buddhistic and therefore doesn't follow it up (he comes back to the subject later on, however), but you can see the interesting metaphysical perspectives that begin to open up. Incidentally there's one useful book where one can read up about the Buddha as Cosmic Person. It's a very old book, though a good one: *The System of Buddhistic Thought* (Calcutta, 1912), by Yamakami Sogen.

**Gotami:** Would you say that any one of those theories was more useful than any other?

**S:** I don't know. [It's not so much a question of different theories, as of different approaches to a reality that transcends [236] thought.] Some people find it easier to think in terms of Cosmic Mind, others in terms of the Void, and so on. Personally I think these are all quite valid approaches.

**Gotami:** Even this one of being, as Dr. Matics says the Mādhyamika in particular was, reluctant to speak of an X-factor and shying away from an Absolute or anything like that?

**S:** Sometimes it seems that, from a practical point of view, the Mādhyamika position is a bit unrealistic, even academic: *ëPhenomenality* has been dispersed, but you mustn't think of what remains as an Absolute. The fact is that you need an Absolute most of the time, that is, until you really come to the point where you can do without it, otherwise your premature rejection of Absolutes becomes a sort of relativism in the ordinary intellectual sense. I rather think that for practical purposes either the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda *ëOne Mindí* approach or the Tantric *ëOne Buddhaí* approach, as it eventually becomes, would be more helpful. But I wouldn't like to dogmatise about this. Certainly the Mādhyamika standpoint (if you can call it a standpoint) does represent the ultimate X-*ëviewí* in strictly orthodox Buddhist terms; but for that very reason, perhaps, it's the least useful. It's so advanced that you can't do very much with it until you are very advanced yourself.

**Aśvajit:** It seems to me that those three views can all be useful from time to time according to different circumstances. One may feel that getting too involved in the theoretical approach is not being helpful, so this is why one goes over to the 'One Buddha' kind of approach, which is much more feelingful; but then, having got into that, you get a bit lost in feelings, and must begin to clarify your thought again.

**S:** Yes, you have to become a bit more austere. In Zen there's quite a lot of the 'One Mind' Yogācāra type of approach, particularly that of the *Lañkāvatāra Sūtra*, with which Zen is historically connected. We also found this type of approach in *The Awakening of Faith* when we studied it some time ago.

p.96                      In Buddhism there is an axiomatic and cosmic law to the effect that when one does something for others, he benefits himself on the phenomenal plane, although the benefit may not be immediate or direct; but self-benefit in any real sense, regardless of this law, is a misnomer forced upon us by the limitations of language, and it is better described impersonally as pertaining to the approaches of Enlightenment.

**S:** We often have to speak in terms of self-development, - in terms of controlling your own mind, devoting yourself to your own good, etc.; but this is only a manner of speaking. If you really and genuinely do that, you are benefiting others too. Similarly, if you really and genuinely devote yourself to helping others, you also benefit yourself. As you progress in the spiritual life, you are less and less able truly to discriminate between the two. Suppose you spend the morning in your room, meditating for your own benefit. Well, when you go out and meet others you are in a much more positive state of mind, and this affects them positively, so that indirectly your meditation benefits them too. On the other hand, if you sacrifice your own time and convenience in order to do things for other people, then, if you do it in [237] the right spirit, it benefits you as well. At least you've overcome sloth and torpor. At least you've been active and busy in some good cause.

p.96                      One is not to seek self-benefit when practicing the Supreme Mystery, since he has no self to benefit (although benefit will come); and at all times he is to direct his effort to the other.

**S:** There is this very strong sense, in the Mahāyāna, of devoting oneself to the promotion of good, and getting rid of sorrow and suffering, without so much of the personal reference. In a way it doesn't matter whether you call it mine or yours: there is this mass of suffering to be got rid of; there is this mass of joy which can be brought into existence. We are all affected by the cloud of suffering, so let's all get rid of it, without bothering too much which bit is mine and which bit is yours. In the same way with the cloud of joy, and even with the cloud of Enlightenment; just try to bring it into existence. I might do a bit more than you, or you might do a bit more than me, but we all benefit in the end: we all share it; we all enjoy it. There's a little story in this connection about Sariputta. He had been meditating in the forest one day, and when he came out his friend Moggallana asked him how it was that his face was shining with such unusual radiance. Sariputta replied, 'All day I've been meditating in the forest, but there never came to me the thought 'I am meditating'. It's a bit like that. In this little episode there's a bit of the Mahāyāna spirit. Meditation is brought into existence, but it isn't anybody's property. It's just as much yours as mine. A higher state of consciousness has been brought into existence. I'm not saying it's mine: it's yours too. That's the spirit of the Bodhisattva also, at his own much higher level. Some good is being brought into existence, - some higher states of being, some happiness, some joy. It's not mine - it's everybody's. That's the attitude behind the Bodhisattva's so-called 'renunciation' of a personal Nirvāna. He knows it isn't his, anyway. It's there to be shared by all, so to speak.

p.96

... one views himself as full of faults and others to be oceans of virtue.

**S:** Of course it isn't literally that others have got all the virtues and you've got all the faults, but we usually tend to look at things the other way round. We usually tend to see our own virtues more quickly than our faults, and the faults of others more quickly than their virtues. So let's turn the whole thing round. Let's concentrate on the good side of others a bit more, and on our own weaker side a bit more also. In that way we shall redress the balance and, in the end, see everything as it really is.

p.97

...there is a sense in which anything is an ocean of virtue if rightly understood ...

**S:** Just like the enemy being really a friend.

... and there is another sense in which everything is an ocean of faults, and (here is the puzzle) either view may lead to Enlightenment.

[238]

**S:** When you see conditioned existence as a whole as full of faults, that leads to detachment from conditioned existence, and thus it is a way to Enlightenment. Similarly, when you see conditioned things as oceans of virtue you will be strongly attracted to the virtue and, to that extent, move away from the *samsāra*. So that method works too.

There's something much more elementary than viewing others as oceans of virtue, and that is, being much more appreciative of their good side. We should have a much more definitely appreciative attitude towards things and people. A lot of people are lacking in the quality of positive appreciation, and the expression of that appreciation. This is something I've been talking about rather a lot lately, because I've been rather strongly aware of it. People don't appreciate enough. Goethe mentions this here and there, and also Rilke. In some of his poetry Rilke goes quite deeply into the matter, which is also linked up with the idea of thanksgiving and rejoicing in merits. The fact is that we should have a much more positive and appreciative attitude. Only too often we don't give appreciation, or else we give it halfheartedly, and that creates a lot of frustration and disappointment. We should express our appreciation much more than we do - not only see the good side of things, which is sometimes difficult enough, but also express it, and let people know we appreciate the things that they do. We are often very deficient in this respect. Yet even from a practical, psychological point of view (leaving aside spiritual considerations), appreciation is very important. If you say to someone, "Well, that was really good. You've done it really well", - if they have done it well, of course (and if you sincerely feel they have why not say it?), - then it sets up good vibrations, as it were. It's not a question of a bit of backslapping, or back scratching, but of genuine, heartfelt appreciation. Such appreciation is a very useful thing, and moreover good in itself.

**Vajradaka:** Very often it can be the key to a natural, positive flow between people.

**S:** Yes, right. Absence of appreciation can often obstruct the flow, especially when it is withheld in situations where it would be quite natural and appropriate. Some people find it very difficult to express their appreciation. They just don't know how to do it.

**Vajradaka:** It seems to come up so quickly and go so quickly. If you're not right on the ball it's gone, and you've missed it. Really it's a matter of training yourself to do it.

**S:** Yes, training yourself not to withhold the appreciation that is due.

**Mike:** It comes back to promptitude of action.

**S:** Yes, indeed. In the case of one's feelings, especially, one has to be quite watchful about that, because unless you express a feeling on the spot it doesn't get expressed at all and usually goes a bit sour. Positive feelings in particular should not be left unexpressed, because there's a natural urge to express them. Even if you feel you might be making yourself a bit ridiculous, never mind, say [239] what you feel. Rilke is very much concerned with this question of praise. He's always saying that praise is the great thing: you should praise everything and adopt an attitude of praise towards it. Quite a few of his poems touch on this. Praise is the great word, as it were, the word that is wanted. Rilke is rather against anything negative or dispraising. Praise nature. Praise a tree for being a tree, a human being for being a human being. Praise is the great word, and that should be the attitude. It's very much the Bodhisattva's attitude. It's also, in a way, the attitude of the Christian who praises God for the beauty of creation though here, of course, there is a theological difficulty, in that there are certain unpleasant aspects of creation, and if you believe that God is all good you wonder how he could have created those aspects too. But leaving that aside, praise is very much the attitude of, say, St. Francis when he sings his Canticle of the Sun - when he gives praise to Brother Sun, and praise to Sister Water, and so on. That seems to be his attitude. It's not just sentimentality; it goes much deeper than that. St. Francis gives praise to Brother Fire too, even when he burns him.

**Vajradaka:** There's such a strong tendency amongst people to run themselves down!

**S:** And run others down - run life down, run everything down. You notice it in politics. Nowadays politics is mainly just knocking. There's rarely anything positive or constructive about it. It's all grumbling, whining, complaining and finding fault - all prevaricating, carping and criticizing. There is hardly anything strong, constructive and inspiring. Where, indeed, do you find this in politics? You find plenty of fine words and flourishing phrases, but they are empty and hollow and the people who use them don't mean them - you know that from their past behaviour, and from the way that they say them. It's just propaganda and hasn't anything real in it. Then there is misattribution of motives, one politician trying to make whatever the other one has said sound worse than it really was, or misinterpreting it. This goes on all the time. There's nothing positive or constructive, not to mention creative. A great deal of our life seems to be of this captious nature. You can't even praise anything wholeheartedly, or approve of anything wholeheartedly. We seem to have got into a very negative syndrome. This is what I feel. I've felt it even among the Friends at times, except that they, being good Buddhists, can't be openly negative, so that if they haven't anything positive to say they just keep quiet and go all dull.

**Mike:** What should one do if one feels really negative and seems to be behaving in a rather dull way?

**S:** For one thing, you mustn't inflict your negative states on others. Sometimes you may be entitled, in the positive context of friendship and mutual help, to let out negative things with people, but you must be very careful not to overdo this. Some forms of modern psychotherapy seem to encourage this sort of letting out to a greater extent than is justified. People should be encouraged to be much more positive. If they can be more positive then, even though there may be the occasional outbreak of negativity, the negative states will be dealt with automatically. A lot of our troubles are due to the fact that we are not allowed to be positive. Only too often it is our positive feelings, not our negative ones, that get repressed by the way in which we live. A [240] lot of negativity is positiveness just gone a bit sour: it hasn't had a chance to express itself. I'm very suspicious of the whole ideology of: You must let all your negative emotions out. You can go on like that for years, because the energy is there, but you just keep on giving it a negative expression.

**Gisela:** It's self-stimulating.

**Subhuti:** This is because negative emotions aren't primary. There's usually something underneath.

**S:** Right. Something which is either positive or at least neutral. I don't think there is such a thing as negative energy or negative emotion as such. It's just that a negative twist has been given to that basically positive - I don't think I'll even say neutral - energy. You can very easily just turn the valve a bit this way, or a bit that, and it's surprising how quickly the so-called negativity turns positive - or vice versa, in some cases. Just give that tiny little twist, and it makes all the difference in the world.

**Gisela:** It does have a lot to do, I think, with expressing it promptly. I've observed that in myself quite a lot. When I've wanted to express something positive, but hesitated and didn't, then it just kind of grew in myself. At first it just became dull and in the end it came out in something negative.

**S:** In its most widely current form, - which may not be the real thing, - "psychology" always stresses the negative emotions. It tells one to let out the negative emotions, but says nothing about letting the positive ones out. It's almost as though whatever was on the surface was positive and all that stuff hidden down beneath must be negative. But I just can't agree with this. I think that there is, if anything, more positive emotion - or potentially positive emotion - than there is negative.

**Gisela:** I think this way of thinking is inherent in Freud. Maybe that's where it comes from.

**S:** Perhaps also from Christianity - your natural impulses being sinful. In Buddhism your natural impulses are samsaric, but that's different from being sinful.

**Aśvajit:** I remember one master at the school I went to giving a little sermon once on sin, and he pointed out that sin spelled backwards was n-i-s, which he pronounced *ñiceí* - which is significant. *[Laughter]* It was the most unpleasant sermon I think I've ever heard. But it represents the Christian attitude.

**Subhuti:** I've been thinking about my conditioning, and I've been conditioned to feel that to be positive is to be silly.

**S:** This applies to men more than to women, I think. Women in this respect are less repressed, less afraid of being silly, and often they are more positive than men emotionally: more happy than men, more cheerful.

**Gisela:** I think that's part of our conditioning. Men are not supposed to show any emotions or feelings.

**S:** Not in this culture, at any rate.

**Mary:** I thought women were brought up like that too! *[Laughter]* [241] At school it's "Don't speak. Don't move. Don't do this."

**S:** To some extent this is a class thing. "Working-class" women, as they used to be called, aren't brought up in this way. They aren't really brought up at all. They just behave naturally, very often. But "ladies" are rather different.

**Mary:** You used to have to sit on a chair all dressed up and wait to go and say "How do you do!"

**S:** I remember a passage in the life of Florence Nightingale, who came from a wealthy upper middle-class family. Her mother and her elder sister used to lie on divans all day, beautifully dressed, telling each other not to do anything in case they got tired! *[Laughter]* She wrote about this in a letter and said it was driving her mad, because she didn't feel like lying on a divan. *[Laughter]* That's how she took up nursing, when she was in her late thirties, I think: having been completely frustrated. That's how well-brought-up young women were supposed

to live - just lie on divans until someone came along and said, "Will you marry me?", and you said, "I'll ask papaí, [Laughter] and that was that. Otherwise you just lay on the divan.

But to carry the discussion a bit further. It's not just that our positive emotions are repressed, but that we are repressed: it's our whole being. As a result of this we tend to withhold our total ěselvesí, so to speak, and are not fully into what we are doing and what we are saying. We enter only with a small part of ourselves - just the tip of the iceberg, as it were.

**Gisela:** It just occurred to me that being in negative emotions is very unliberating: one stays in fear. Things like this whole idea that man is bad, - this Christian concept, - keep putting fear into man, which is the opposite to making one free.

**S:** Well, if you are bad, so what? It's you. What can you do about it, at least for the time being? That's what you are now, so that's where you have to start from, however far you may eventually go. But basically, I think, it's a suppression of being. It's not even just a question of suppressing positive emotions: it's the suppression, literally, of the human being - with the emphasis on the being, in the dynamic sense. That gets suppressed. We can't fully be ourselves. I don't want to give this too many psychological overtones, because it can be understood in a very silly sort of way, and in any case it's much more than just psychological. It's much more existential, as it were. In any situation, we are unable to mobilise our total human resources. This is what happens - whether we are doing something, or talking, or behaving in a certain way: there's at least three-quarters of us - usually nine-tenths - completely left out of the transaction and not operative at all. Most people - almost everybody, in fact - are in this sort of condition.

**Subhuti:** Most of the energy is involved in suppressing the other part of the energy.

**S:** Yes, right. It's as though out of our total energy there's only 10% that we use. Of the remaining 90%, 45% is being held down, and 45% is doing the holding down. This is what happens much of the time: we function on 10% of our energy. When the suppressed - and suppressing - energy starts coming up it's as though, with very little [242] encouragement, you could almost blow your environment to smithereens. Maybe some people are afraid of that. If you had a few dozen people with their energies totally mobilised, there'd be no holding them. But there aren't many people like that.

p.97                      Śāntideva asserts that the aspirant on the path of the Bodhisattva is far from achievement until he learns to make an exchange (*parivarta*) of his own infinite happiness for the infinite sorrow of another.

**S:** This is reminiscent of orthodox Christian teaching about Christ taking on himself the sins of the world, which could be regarded as a sort of ětransferenceí between Christ and all beings. As Dr. Matics pointed out earlier on, however, in connection with the Bodhisattva's practice of *parā́tma-samatā́*, it is the ideal of every Buddhist to get rid of the idea of possession with regard to merits and goodness, to ěexchangeí himself and all other beings, and to contribute impartially and objectively to the increase of the sum total of good and happiness in the world and the decrease of the sum total of misery. Thus every Bodhisattva, and every [Mahāyāna] Buddhist, is a sort of Christ, you can say. There's not just one Christ.

Pp.98                      The principle is a little like some Christian conceptions of the treasury of merit acquired by the Son as he lay upon the cross....

**S:** In Catholic teaching there is the conception of the treasury of merits of the saints, that is to say, of merits which are the product of works of supererogation. The saints have led lives of extraordinary holiness, and the merits which they accumulated were more than they actually required for their own personal salvation, so that the balance left over accrues to the Church collectively and the Church has that treasury of merits at its disposal. That is the doctrine

behind the sale of indulgences, because if the Church has such a stock of merits at its disposal it can give them to individual members or - this is where the doctrine becomes very crude and materialistic - it can even sell them. This is how the sale of indulgences began, which Luther protested against. Though the doctrine of the treasury of merits can be abused, you can see that there is an element of truth in it, i.e. that the holy life of the saint, or the Bodhisattva, isn't something which benefits him. It's a sort of treasure, which is available to all who participate in that particular spiritual body or, as Buddhism would say, all sentient beings: directly or indirectly. It's quite interesting to see these little reflections and quasi-adumbrations of Buddhist teachings in other religions. In the present instance, it's as though there's some vague realisation that the saint couldn't be a saint just for himself - though of course, in the Catholic teaching a saint gets salvation and there's literally a balance of merits left over, like a sum of money. In this way the doctrine does become a bit materialised, but there's still some correspondence with what Śāntideva says.

**Gotami:** You've said in a lecture when talking about *dāna* that the greatest thing you can give is yourself. It's very difficult to get a feel of this. Could you give an example?

**S:** Let's put it in a different way. In the lecture I put things more in the traditional Buddhist way, but in terms of our present [243]discussion it's being fully present in any situation where other people are involved: not keeping any part of yourself back, but having all your energies, - the whole of you, - fully mobilised in relation to the person or persons with whom you are dealing. That's the giving of yourself. What is happening now, I think, is that we are in a somewhat transitional period as regards expressions and terminology. In the *Survey* I stuck strictly to traditional Buddhist expressions, and explained everything in those terms as best I could. The same - more or less - in *The Three Jewels*; the same in most of the lectures. But now I begin not to do that so much, and to speak not so much with reference to tradition, and the scriptures, but just from the way I see things myself here and now. Since I'm communicating, on the whole, with English people with a European cultural background, etc., it comes out a bit differently. What is said does square ultimately with tradition, there's no doubt, - otherwise the Friends wouldn't be a Buddhist movement; but there's certainly a way of putting things which seems more true, even, and more relevant to us as we are here and now, than some of the traditional ways. It's exactly the same thing that is said, but there's more impetus to it, and more resonance, when it's put in our own idiom. Speaking in this way means being fully mobilised where you are. It means giving the whole of yourself to the discussion, or action, or whatever it is - not keeping any part of yourself back. That's giving yourself. It's not giving yourself away as when you sell yourself into slavery. Maybe the original Indian idiom suggests that, or sometimes even states it quite explicitly, which is quite misleading. We are really having to do - and this is happening spontaneously - what the Chinese did when Buddhism came to China. They transformed, eventually, the typically Indian modes of expression into something more Chinese. That's one of the great factors in the rise of Chán. It wasn't a separate school. It was much more like the whole spiritual life of Buddhism translated into Chinese idiom - and, when it went to Japan, into Japanese idiom. But some people want to insist on our talking this idiom here. Well, you can't help it at first, and personally I speak the Indian Buddhist idiom, and enjoy speaking it; but I'm beginning not to speak it. I'm almost beginning to forget it, in a way. Sometimes I have to look it up in the *Survey*.

**Gotami:** I find that when you really give, it's as if energy is coming in, which is rather strange.

**S:** That's because you can't separate giving from receiving - self and others. You're doing it to others, but also it's being done to you. It's not a literal giving in the sense that what you give you've lost, because he's got it now. It's not like that at all. The more you give, the more you've got. That's exactly what the Mahāyāna sūtras say about the Bodhisattva.

**Aśvajit:** I notice this very much at work. I often go in in the mornings and find that the people are rather dull, but perhaps I'm a little bit cheerful and I make a joke here and there, and after an hour everybody else in the office is laughing and joking and then I feel much

better. Funnily enough, it's much more difficult to generate this positive attitude among the Friends sometimes, I find.

**S:** Now why do you think that is? I'm sure you're right, but why is it?

**Mike:** I think there's quite often an element of mistrust, almost. People are trying to work out your motives all the time.[244]

**S:** Too much psychology.

**Mike:** Definitely!

**S:** They can't take something positive at its face value.

**Mike:** It's always, "Why is he doing that?"

**Vajradaka:** I also feel quite strongly it's a matter of preconceived ideas of how one should be. People are coming into the Friends now and we've been training to be mindful. So, "Be mindful!" and that excludes bouncing and saying, "Wotcher!"

**S:** In other words mindfulness is understood as just alienated awareness, not as real awareness along with the action and the feeling.

**Gotami:** You very often say that bounciness and happiness means loss of mindfulness.

**S:** In practice it does - but that doesn't mean you should go to the opposite extreme. There are two extremes: (1) bounciness, etc., without mindfulness, and (2) mindfulness without feeling, which is the alienated type of awareness. You've got to have both. Sometimes you may have to go to one extreme, as it were, in order to balance the other, but sooner or later you have to get back to the middle position where bounciness and mindfulness are not only fully developed but thoroughly integrated with each other.

**Subhuti:** I wonder if one doesn't perhaps have to be not too concerned with mindfulness for a limited period in order to allow something [repressed] to emerge.

**S:** Indeed,. Maybe even mindfulness has to have its phases. You are very mindful for a few weeks, say, after which you allow yourself to get more into your feelings. Not that mindfulness is completely neglected, of course, but during that period you let your feelings rip and sort out the question of how mindful you were afterwards.

**Dhruva:** You'd get a much clearer picture of what mindfulness is if you just let yourself do what you want to do and just watch it.

**S:** That's why it can be very useful, in the early stages of one's development, to get drunk just once or twice. A lot can be learned from this, and in any case you don't ever completely lose your mindfulness.

**Gisela:** In the fairy tale of Snow White the Queen looks in the mirror and asks it to tell her who is the most beautiful in the land. It's a bit like that: "Who's the most mindful of all?"  
[Laughter]

**S:** Again it's like the story about the different orders of Catholic monks. They had a meeting, and a Franciscan monk got up and said, "It's true that the Dominicans are the most learned, and the Jesuits the best educated and most resourceful, and of course the Benedictines make the best wine, but when it comes to humility, we Franciscans are tops!" [Laughter]

**Dhruva:** I've had this pointed out to me on a number of occasions by people who've observed Order members being "good Buddhists" and not just being themselves.

**Vajradaka:** Yes, but that can be a load of rubbish too. *[Laughter]*

**S:** I think I summed it up a few minutes ago, actually, in "Too much psychology". We've got a bit sick with psychological analysis. [245] I really feel this. We've had so much of it pumped into the Movement from various sources. There's so much of it in the air. It does lead to this distrust and doubt, and always trying to find a murky motive, because that's more likely to be the true motive. In other words, someone's much more likely to be, at bottom, negative in what he's doing rather than positive, so try and find the negative motive, because then you'll understand what he's really about. This is all rather twisted and perverted. Tutored as you are by psychology, you find it difficult to believe that he's behaving in the way he does because he's happy, or because he feels friendly. You feel that you won't really understand him until you've got to the murky motive. Maybe there should be a bit more bouncing around and general jubilation. It would be good if we could find ways of being happy and joyful, and even dancing around, with mindfulness.

**Gisela:** Maybe that's the next step, or a phase that people have to go through after being alienated.

**S:** Yes. But watch that overdose of "psychology". Since I've been away from that kind of atmosphere, and thinking things over on my own, I've almost come to feel that analytical psychology does more harm than good.

**Subhuti:** Perhaps it's the wrong sort of psychology that does the harm. There do seem to be more positive ways of looking at psychology.

**S:** Well, Buddhism has got its own "psychology" in the Abhidharma and the Yogācāra. Perhaps we ought to rely more on that.

**Gisela:** It's a weird brand of psychology that we now have in the West!

**S:** A sort of popularised and oversimplified psychology?

**Gisela:** Yes.

**Vajradaka:** It's very easy to get sucked into. I've been feeling the same way that you do for a long time, but just found I got sucked into it more and more and was thinking in that way even though I really don't agree with it.

**S:** Right. Or talking in that way, sometimes, for purposes of communication.

**Subhuti:** I think we ought to take the premise that positive energy is primary and that negative energy is always a repression or a twisting of positive energy and, therefore, secondary. Negative emotion is always an expression of tension, of an inability to be positive and natural. We ought not to see it as primary.

**S:** You definitely get the impression, from some forms of psychology, that the deeper you go, the worse it becomes; not the deeper you go, the purer the energy - nothing like that. The deeper you go into someone's mind, the nastier will be what you find: automatically. Anything that appears nice is superficial, and not to be taken seriously. Friendliness is not to be taken seriously: it's probably a form of submissiveness, with lots of anger lurking behind, so you look for the anger and dismiss the friendliness as not really very relevant even.

**Subhuti:** I can think of only two psychological viewpoints which do express that: those of Reich, and of Janov in *Primal Therapy*.

**S:** It's very strange, but in the *Vimalakirti Sūtra* I found a [246] Bodhisattva who let out a great scream that was heard all over the universe, which I thought quite odd. And then I thought of that book.

**Gisela:** I think that psychology is largely misunderstood. It would probably do people good to actually go to the sources and read Freud and Jung and the others. They might well get a different perspective.

**S:** I usually find among the "Friends" that the most they've read is just a few passages of Jung, edited by somebody else in a very popular way. Or maybe they've learned verbally, just picking things up in conversation without any serious study at all. I doubt if a single person in the "Friends", with one possible exception, has done any serious actual reading in Jungian psychology, say, or in any other.

When I was in India, I was completely innocent of any psychology except Buddhist psychology, but on coming back to this country I found psychology very much in the air. Many of the people I met at Hampstead, and at the Buddhist Society and elsewhere, were very much into psychology. Fromm, especially, was very popular; Jung was popular too, Freud less so. Reich was a little bit popular, and after a while became very popular indeed, at least in some circles. In the course of my first two or three years back in England I read all these authors, and several others as well, and I found some of their books very good and very useful, but a vague, popularised, "crudified" psychology seems not to be helping the "Friends" at the moment.

**Aśvājī:** It may be that talking about negativity has, for a very long time, hopefully been a method of promoting mindfulness; but it's a very unfortunate mindfulness - just keeping people's attention, yet culturally speaking, no satisfactory substitute has been found.

**Gotami:** I've found that the most useful way of bringing people back to mindfulness, and getting down to this "primal energy", is just to say things like, "Do you really mean that? Do you really want to do what you are doing?" In this way, you get them down to what it is that they may want to do, and whether they really want to do it, and also to being mindful. Gradually they begin to be more at home with themselves. It's quite simple: "Are you really being honest? Do you really want to sit and meditate?" and so on.

**S:** Right. You may well come to a balance and say, "Well, I don't, actually. There's quite a big part of me which just doesn't want to, but my overall "objective" judgement is that meditation would be good for me and that therefore I should do it, so on balance I meditate." Often you have to proceed like that for quite a long time, your attitude to things like meditation being ambivalent on account of your dual nature.

**Gotami:** There's no need to go into all this psychology. If only people will say to themselves, "I don't really want to do this," then, when they're in the opposite kind of situation they'll notice that too. In this way they'll gradually become aware of who they are and how they work just quite simply, and get down to their energies and their mindfulness at the same time.

**S:** It's significant that there is a lot more energy flowing round in the "Friends" than ever before. It isn't just the bigger number of people. A lot seems to be coming out which is very positive. [247]

p.99                      In a specialized and technical use of the word, *ṛddhi* is a by-product of trance, but any trance is *ṛddhi*, because it is a supernatural transcendence of phenomenality

**S:** *Ṛddhi* is energy or potency in general, especially the very refined and powerful "magical" energy generated by the meditation experience. [The transcendence here spoken of is, however, supernormal rather than supernatural.]

p.99                      The Bodhisattva is a white magician ....

**S:** This comes out very strongly in the Tantric form of the Bodhisattva ideal.

A saint like Francis of Assisi could pronounce the Bodhisattva vow and appropriately undertake *parātma-parivartana* as a symbolic expression of his moral intentions: but as a mere humanitarian, however holy, he cannot really even begin to try, for these are things which can be accomplished only on the level of trance. *Rddhi* is required.

**S:** In other words the practice of meditation generates what we can only call a tremendous *ē*thought-powerí (though it isnít thought in the conceptual sense), and this is a very real and positive and concrete thing. One who wishes to be a Bodhisattva has to develop this. A lot of things that we may just think impossible become capable of achievement when our aspirations are backed up, as they are in the case of the Bodhisattva, by the tremendous thought-power generated in meditation. A humanitarian is all right. Heís working on the ordinary level, doing his best to help people; but his *ē*thoughtí is comparatively feeble. Itís not been concentrated by meditation. His energies have not been integrated. He hasnít been able to generate the higher degrees of *ē*thought powerí, isnít able to operate on the higher dhyanic planes, and therefore isnít really able to substitute another for himself. This has been well put by the editor, and shows the difference between the Bodhisattva ideal and simple humanitarianism.

p. 100                      Nirvāna itself is abandonment, and abandonment is limitless as Nirvāna. In the course of countless time cycles, all give and give until there is nothing left to give, and that state is *nivṛta*, the condition of being satisfied, happy, content, emancipated, extinguished.

**Vajradaka:** Is the state of *nivṛta* just before Nirvāna?

**S:** No, itís just a different grammatical form. *Nivṛta* is the state or condition of being that, or rather of having become that. Nirvāna is the particular state itself considered as a *ē*thingí. (The Pali terms are *nibbuta* and *Nibbana*.) *Nivṛta* is literally *ē*blown outí, while Nirvāna is the *ē*blown-out-nessí, or that which is left over - whatever it may be - when the *ē*blowing outí is finished.

pp.100-101                      ... the Bodhisattva gives his body for the pleasure of other beings, inviting them to strike it, to revile it, to cover it with refuse, to laugh at it, to maltreat it in every way. [248]

**S:** What is really being inculcated here is a detached and objective attitude towards the body, though this isnít quite what the actual wording of the text suggests. The Bodhisattva deploys his body for the greatest benefit of all - he doesnít throw it aside and leave it there for anybody to do what they like with. Written as it is in a fervent, hyperbolic sort of style, the text does in a way say this, but the statement is to be taken in conjunction with other things that Śāntideva has said earlier on.

**Gotami:** If you look at the body as a bag of tools which has been loaned to you for use, then you can get whatever use from it you need.

**S:** Right, and you donít leave your tools lying about for children to play with and spoil, or even hurt themselves with.

p.101                      They belong to the other, and the other can do with them as he pleases without fear of karmic reprisal. The reason for this stress upon the physical is, perhaps, because the physical is immediate and near-at-hand ...

**S:** In India there is a greater understanding of the idea of personal serviceability. People serve one another much more. Juniors serve elders. Younger brothers and sisters serve older brothers and sisters. Wives serve husbands. Children serve parents. Pupils serve teachers. They have this idea of doing things for other people, and spending yourself in the service of others, much more than we have it here. We tend to stand on our rights more: "Why should I do it? Why shouldn't he do it himself?" Indians don't feel like that. Even among brothers, for instance, who are separated by only a few years' difference in age, there's a definite hierarchy, and the elder brother is almost in the place of a father to the younger ones. They are quite aware of the difference, and the younger brother really does defer to the elder, and the elder really does take a positive, quasi-fatherly interest in the younger. This happens all the way down the line - and sometimes there are ten or twelve sons. (Sons and daughters have separate little hierarchies.)

**Vajradaka:** It's really beautiful! In Japan all old people, men and women, are called Grandfather and Grandmother in a kind of respectful way. [Laughter]

**S:** In India, if you call anyone Grandfather, it's definitely intended to be respectful, and is not necessarily an indication of age. Once I was talking with some of my Nepalese students in Kalimpong about the different attitudes of people to one another and to me. At that time I must have been about 35. I asked one young man of about 20 how he regarded me. In a quite heartfelt sort of way he exclaimed, "Oh sir, you are just like our Grandfather!" He didn't mean that I was as old as his grandfather, but that he had the same sort of feeling towards me. I was someone senior and protective.

**Gisela:** The Russians do that a bit too. They say *babushka* to show love and respect for a person, and it can be anyone. It doesn't have to be your own grandparents.

**S:** In several Indian languages, grandfather is *dadaji*, which is very affectionate and respectful. It doesn't sound at all like our English grandfather, or even grandad. It's got a quite different sort [249] of ring to it. Like *babushka* it's affectionate as well as respectful. This again is something which is common in India, but which we find it difficult to understand: strong affection with real respect, both together. We tend to separate the two. If there's a lot of respect there's no affection. If there's a lot of affection there's no respect. But in India, and in other countries with strong traditional cultures, they come very much together. You feel strong affection, but also very definite respect. This is very much the case among monks in the East, especially Theravāda monks. The elders are treated with great respect and deference. They are given first place, fed first and served first. All this is observed really strictly. At the same time there's very strong affection. There's nothing hard, no invoking of authority or status - nothing like that at all. They are completely free from that, and I've met hundreds of monks. They are very, very friendly and affectionate, but at the same time very respectful within the hierarchy.

**Gisela:** I think it may have come from Protestantism, this kind of authority and crushing of warmth.

**S:** Be that as it may, the separation between respect and affection is there. Many people (especially young people) seem to think it axiomatic that you should dislike your parents and not get on well with them. The idea of being fond of your parents, or actually respecting them, is considered almost laughable. I'm sure there are many young people who would be ashamed to say that they respected their parents - but in the East it's still taken for granted. With us, respect is now almost a dirty word: go out of your way to be disrespectful, show that you don't feel respect even for teachers, certainly not for secular teachers. If, within the Movement itself, we could only bring respect and affection together again it would be a very positive development. I think I can see the germs of this already in the attitude of newcomers to the Movement towards Order members - especially those who have been Order members for a few years. There is, at least here and there, a definite feeling of warmth towards the Order members, as well as a quite definite degree of respect.

One gives the body or does not give it, whereas a gift of intangibles, psychic elements, virtues, pleasures, etc., easily could lead us into mere verbalisation.

**S:** This applies to money. It's very easy to give verbally, but when it comes down to concrete things you can very often see what a person's real attitude is. You can certainly see whether or not he's prepared to give money. This is why, in the Tantra, they always insist on an offering in gold or hard cash, as the case may be. Their reasoning is very clear: If you really care about the initiation you'll be prepared to pay. This is very much the Tantric attitude, which is not the case with regard to the other *yānas*. I was a bit surprised the first time I came across it, when I had my first Tantric initiations. It isn't really a payment, but an offering of something as solid and substantial as cash is expected. That's the tradition, and it sometimes calls for quite severe self-examination, especially when they say, 'Give whatever you think appropriate.' So you think, 'Does he mean 50 rupees, or 100 rupees?' Or you think, 'Can I afford it?' Or, 'Does it really matter whether I can afford it or not?' And so on. This is a very good index. It's very easy to say, 'Oh yes, I give my support. I'm with you, and all that, but when it comes to something solid and substantial, [250] which you actually have to give, like your own physical body, your own time, your own energy, your own money, then it is that it really tells. That's a very good indicator! I think that in a way - without overstressing the point - the condition of the *dāna* bowl at the Centre is a very reliable barometer for ascertaining the state of the spiritual weather.

**Subhuti:** A heavy depression! [*Laughter*]

**S:** I think Kevin was one of those who were genuinely puzzled, about two years ago, when we were having our beautiful meetings at Centre House once a week. We'd lost our old Centre, 'Sakura', and hadn't yet found the one at Archway, and were trying to raise some money to pay for the new centre when it was found. Kevin constructed, very laboriously, an enormous and quite marvellous lotus. People would be so entranced by this lotus, he hoped, that they would put money in the slot which he had made in the calyx and it would go sliding all the way down the tube-like stalk into the collection box at the end. He used to go around wagging this lotus, which was about six foot long, under people's noses, and in this way collected quite a bit. But at the same time he did encounter, among quite long-standing members of the Movement, a definite reluctance to dig into their pockets. When we got back to Muswell Hill he'd be quite troubled by this, and wonder why it was that people were not more generous. Verbally, everybody would be with you: 'What a wonderful thing, a new Centre!' Yes, everybody should give as much as they can. But when it came to the actual giving, it was sometimes difficult to get even sixpence. Kevin felt that in the case of quite a few people he was having almost to extract the money from them. There was no spontaneous flow of giving.

**Mike:** What can we do about encouraging people to give?

**S:** Apart from general exhortations, and little stunts and tricks like Kevin's with the lotus, I just don't know. Maybe it's an indication of the general state of things, so that it's on the general state of things that you have to work. When I was at the Hampstead Vihāra I did, once or twice, say a lot about *dāna* in the course of a lecture, and it was noticed that the *dāna*-bowl was remarkably full afterwards. Perhaps we ought to have occasional talks on these things, even a lecture on the Perfection of Giving, or the place of *dāna* in the Buddhist life. It's not just a question of giving money, though often people think of it in that way: it's a question of *dāna*, which is part of your spiritual life. Certainly a general attitude of generosity, of being willing to give, must be strongly encouraged in the people who attend classes and lectures, because if they are not giving, - not giving themselves, - they will simply be stagnating, and staying where they are.

p.102

It has been noted already, when dealing with the Perfection of *Vīrya*, that Buddhism attempts to make good and profitable use of this powerful source of emotional strength [i.e. pride].

**S:** This is another example of a kind of pseudo-negativity. Don't suppress your pride, but let it have a natural healthy form, a natural healthy outlet. Be proud of Buddhism; be proud of the Buddha himself, and so on.

p 102

The Bodhisattva is allowed to hate, and there is no blame attached, because he has first achieved the realisation that [251] all selves are equal, and he has exchanged, literally, his own self for the other. After having established *ĕselfhood* in the most lowly and the stranger in the *ĕself*, both envy and pride may arise without scruple of the mind.

**S:** Because envy and pride will then be directed quite objectively, according to the needs of the situation. If you really have succeeded in exchanging yourself and others, you can let yourself get as it were angry. Obviously this can be misunderstood. If the anger is going to have a particular effect on a certain person, and really conduce to his or her good, then you must first have made the transference, and as we have seen this can be done only on a very high and powerful level of meditation. Otherwise, your anger is no different from anybody else's. One must therefore be very, very careful in applying this teaching.

**Mike:** Is this anything like antinomianism?

**S:** If it was misunderstood it would be. I've referred to this once or twice in the *Survey*. The antinomianism would consist in your claiming to adopt this sort of attitude, this sort of philosophy, when you are, in fact, no better than anybody else, and in using it to justify your unskilful actions.

**Mike:** Doing it on a lower level of consciousness.

**S:** Yes, doing it on the ordinary level of consciousness, which is lower in relation to the level on which the exchange of self and others takes place. If one had really made the exchange, and really did make no distinction between self and others, you could allow your so-called *ĕself* to get angry with another *ĕself* in order to spur him on, or check him - it wouldn't matter. But only if you've made the exchange first. That's the really important thing. For the vast majority of people it's much better to assume that one hasn't yet reached that level. It's so liable to misinterpretation! One should keep a very close eye on people who profess to have reached this stage and to be behaving in this way. It may not be so at all. They may be simply deceiving themselves. Someone who is really able to do this, really able to behave like this, is very rare indeed. I think one can take that absolutely for granted. Even among spiritually advanced people, there would be very few who could really adopt this attitude, and maybe one is unlikely to meet even one of them. But if one does meet someone who professes to behave like this, keep a very sharp eye on them. It may not be that at all. You do find in India, unfortunately, that this has become rather a general sort of thing. Spiritual personalities are very quick to claim that they are exhibiting anger, for instance, only to test you, or to strengthen your faith, or to help you, when it seems pretty clear to you that they are just giving way to ordinary human weaknesses and passions.

P.103

The self-interest of the Self-anti-self is totally in the interest of the other: The other cannot be praised too highly, and the poor old self that we started with cannot be too severely condemned or abused. He is literally a hateful tool.

**S:** This is to be understood spiritually and not psychologically. When expressions of this sort are used in Eastern texts the danger is that we take them psychologically and fall into self-hatred in a purely psychological sense. Such passages are therefore to be used with caution.

p.103                      Honor, wealth, praise, happiness, ease, and greatness -  
these are to be the destiny of the other: dishonor,  
poverty, blame, misery, ceaseless labor, degradation,  
and shame - this is the portion allotted by the  
Self-anti-self to the self.

**S:** One must bear in mind that most Indians in ancient time were people relatively free from personal psychological problems. They did not suffer from purely psychological feelings of guilt and self-hate, or anything of that sort. In other words they were psychologically quite healthy people. They could therefore take this sort of treatment. I think most people in the West couldn't: it would have a bad psychological effect on them.

The earlier part of the paragraph in which this passage occurs, in particular, is very definitely to be taken in a spiritual sense. It is directed against the ěspiritual egoí, or the fundamental delusion of ěselfí, not against the empirical self in the ordinary psychological sense. If you take it as directed against the latter, you will just start feeling really bad.

p.103                      ìMay my virtues become manifest everywhere  
in the world: but whatever virtues he may have,  
let them not be heard anywhere.î

**Vajradaka:** I don't understand this. He seems to be saying the opposite of what he said before.

**S:** It's the Self-anti-self speaking. He's identified himself now with the other. When he speaks of ěWhatever virtues he may haveí he's referring to the old self, the self that he has abandoned. This is because, as the editor points out immediately before quoting this verse, *parā́tma-parivartana*, or the exchange of self and other, is now complete. You are on the other man's side now, against ěyouí, because you've identified with the other.

**Vajradaka:** Could you do this just in ordinary everyday life, or does it help to be in meditation?

**S:** It's the editor's contention, and I think he's basically right, that you must generate this sort of attitude in meditation and leave it to percolate through into everyday life, otherwise it becomes a very difficult and unreal situation indeed. But if you practise and reflect on it in meditation, and generate that particular energy in meditation, - maybe have some realisation on that level, - then, just like the *mettā*, it will naturally pervade one's behaviour. One will become what is usually called unselfish. But I don't think one should stage elaborate enactments of this by sheer force of will. That would be undesirable. You couldn't do it, anyway, and there'd be a strong rebound sooner or later. You could get into situations of intense mental conflict.

**Mike:** Is it, then, that the content of this particular passage - even of the whole *Bodhicaryāvatāra* - is something which one contemplates until the whole feel of the thing comes through? One doesn't actually try and make a deliberate effort in one's day-to-day life.

**S:** Yes, that is true. There are cases where you need an actual [253] day-to-day effort, backed up by your meditation and contemplation, but there are certain rather extreme things like the substitution of self for others which you can't do in that sort of way. It would be too clumsy and artificial. You therefore try to experience the substitution in deep meditation and let it percolate through. Some things, of course, you may have to take action upon on the practical plane itself. Suppose you want to give up smoking. You won't simply meditate on the evils of

the habit in the hope that this will eventually percolate down into your personal life and bring about the desired change. You decide once and for all: 'Smoking is not good. I'm going to give it up' - and you give it up. The matter is finished with. Quite a lot of things can be dealt with in this way. The substitution of self for others is something rather special. Here one first has the experience, the understanding, the insight, - especially at the time of meditation, - and this gradually percolates through to the level of actual behaviour.

**Mike:** Is there a specific practice related then to *parātma-parivarta*?

**S:** I've not come across one, but Śāntideva appears to assume that one should just reflect vigorously in this manner. It is an example of, in a way, *vipassanā*. First you have the *dhyāna* type of experience and then, quite deliberately, you let the rational mind come to life again, put it to work, and develop insight into the truth of *parātma-samatā* and, in that way, bring about a change in the very substance of your being. This change finds outward expression, your behaviour is transformed.

**Mike:** Would this be a practice which one would not do until one was quite advanced?

**S:** I don't know. What is important is that it shouldn't be just a process of mental reflection, but should be backed up by really solid meditation. The assumption therefore is that you are getting on fairly well with meditation.

**Mike:** Perhaps it's something one could do in solitary retreat?

**S:** Yes, that would be very good.

**Mike:** If one went into solitary retreat, would it be a good idea to have a particular theme?

**S:** That's certainly one way of doing it. One could even have different themes on different days. Go through the 6 or the 10 *pāramitās*, for instance, reflecting on the first today, the second tomorrow, and so on. One could do the same thing with the steps of the noble eightfold path. In the case of the *pāramitās* it's lucky that there are seven days in a week. Some people make a special effort to practise *dāna* on Monday - that's a good start to the week. If you happen to meet a beggar, you give something extra on that day. If you are asked to help someone, you do so. On Tuesday you make a special effort to practise *śīla*. You are particularly scrupulous about your moral behaviour - more so than usual. On the third day, Wednesday, you are very patient, and very tolerant, because on that day you practise *kṣānti*. In this way it proceeds. On the seventh day, Sunday, you try to practise all 6 *pāramitās* together. This is a quite useful way of practising the *pāramitās*. Six of them all at one time is rather a lot, so you concentrate on one each day - you make a special point of it.

The main thing is to start actually practising, and that's the most [254] difficult thing of all. If there's too much to practise you just end up not practising anything. That's why people are sometimes really stunned by lectures on the 40 topics of meditation. They just don't know where to start. One of my Sinhalese monk friends once told me about a monk they knew who had spent his whole life going all over Ceylon, up and down the country, giving lectures on the 40 *kammaṭṭhānas*. He'd never done any meditation, but he was well known for his lectures on the 40 *kammaṭṭhānas*! No doubt he was doing something useful, but you see the sort of thing that can happen. In the same way, a lot of people are confused by all the different books on Buddhism - all the different Buddhist scriptures. Where should one start? Which would be useful? What should one read? There are almost too many books now.

**Mike:** Would contemplation in this manner, on this kind of theme, have the same kind of effect that visualisation is intended to have in the long run? Is it a different approach to the same end?

**S:** Of course there are two aspects of the visualisation. One is the simple visualisation, which belongs to the *samathā* type of meditation, and the other is reflection on it, which is more of

the *vipassanā* type. When you conjure up the visualised form [of a Buddha, Bodhisattva, etc.], and see it clearly, with a steady consciousness, and enjoy what you see, - when you're in a highly concentrated and blissful state - this is *śamathā*. But if you start up mental activity and reflect, "This form was created by my own efforts; it is impermanent; all things are impermanent like this", and if you really see that - that is *vipassanā*. Thus there is a connection between one aspect of the visualisation and the *vipassanā* type of meditation. But simple visualisation is a *śamathā*-type practice, it belongs to the realm of *dhyāna*. Of course people sometimes quite spontaneously start up their own reflections, thus developing a degree of *vipassanā*. This can happen too. You can't separate *śamathā* and *vipassanā* absolutely sharply: the one does sort of shade off into the other.

**Vajradaka:** In the transference of oneself to another person in meditation, do you think there's any particular value in transferring oneself to an enemy, or to someone who isn't on the spiritual path, or, let's say for the sake of example, to a spiritual teacher?

**S:** With regard to spiritual teachers there's a different practice, the Guru Yoga, which comes at the end of the four "foundation practices". This is something which I have so far gone into, to a slight extent, with one person. In the Guru Yoga one places oneself in alignment with the whole lineage of gurus. It is a form of transference, one could say, but one which takes place vertically rather than horizontally.

pp103-104

... the self is full of faults. and even, if among those faults there should be the least little fragment of virtue ... do not praise the self. Keep that virtue hidden, lest it become the occasion for self-pride ... let your happiness be renounced and resented ... Like a helpless bride who is to be abused, who has been purchased and now is to be frightened, ordered, punished, and restrained, so let the self be treated. Like a slave with no self-interest, whose convenience is not considered, who is bought and sold, so let the self be treated.

**S:** Again it's important not to take all this just "psychologically" - and I think that with certain people it would inevitably be so taken. [255] This way of looking at things has to be presented with extreme caution.

**Aśvajit:** I don't understand the distinction between spiritual and psychological in this sense.

**S:** When I say psychological I mean the level of one's ordinary experience of oneself, as when we have the experience, "Here and now, I am I." But Buddhism says that in the ultimate sense there's no "I". How, then, does one reconcile that with the experience of oneself as one actually is? In terms of one's experience here and now, one can't. One therefore takes it on trust, - or maybe one has had a glimpse of it in meditation, - that there is a higher state, at least a more expanded state, which is greater and more comprehensive than the state which one experiences as being oneself. When Buddhism speaks of dissolving the self, or the "I", it does not mean simply negating it on its own level, the level of ordinary experience itself, - the experience of selfhood, - but rather cutting the illusion at its very root. One denies one's own experience not on its own level, but in a more ultimate sense. It's not that you try to destroy yourself psychologically, but that you "cut the root" in such a way that the psychic structure - the so-called ego structure - remains the same but it's sort of illuminated. It functions, but no longer in the same way. It's then an instrument, as it were, in the hands of the Bodhicitta - not functioning under its own steam, which is what it usually does at present. Until we've got a fairly consolidated experience of something which is "not the self", or a state, of "not-self-hood", it cannot but be more or less just words, and difficult even to form an idea about - not to speak of actual insight. Even to understand mentally is difficult. But we should be careful that people don't try to apply directly, on the psychological and practical level, something which is meant to be taken spiritually.

**Vajradaka:** Maybe this was the danger that the Dalai Lama meant in that talk at the Buddhist Society when he said that Tantric practices could be dangerous.

**S:** In a way, though in a different way. You could apply artificially, on a lower level, what was meant to be realised on a higher level and then allowed to trickle down to the lower level, as it were, and transform it in a natural manner.

**Gisela:** I must say I've long puzzled over the distinction between psychological and spiritual. I've understood it now since you've explained it.

**S:** It's a distinction I've introduced myself, or had to introduce, just to prevent misunderstanding. Because I saw people were misunderstanding. I saw this in my Hampstead days, before the Friends was started. Suppose you say 'The Christian Gospel says, hate yourself'. I would say that this is absolutely metaphysically correct, but not to be understood psychologically. It's not that you should feel an actual emotion of hatred against your own self - against Mr. So-and-so or Mrs. So-and-so, - but rather that you should see through your experience of selfhood and see it as something not ultimate and absolute. The injunction doesn't refer to the psychological emotion of hatred, seeking to turn this against yourself. Christ did say quite clearly 'Unless a man hate himself,' but though his words are not easy to understand I assume he didn't mean it in the psychological sense.

**Aśvajit:** The difficulty I experience is, when you use such words as hate that refers, so far as I can see, to a very strong positive [256] negative emotion.

**S:** Yes. For instance, when it is said that you should hate the world, this means simply that you should see through the world, not that you should have a horrible grudge against the world or anything like that.

**Aśvajit:** But why use such words at all? It seems very unskilful.

**S:** It seems to be a question of idiom. Apparently that was the suitable idiom for Christ to use when talking to people in Palestine and for Śāntideva to use writing primarily, I suppose, for Indians; but in view of our present psychological background maybe it's not the idiom for us. I don't myself use this idiom when giving lectures - only when there is something to be explained in traditional sources which themselves use it. When one sees so many people who actually do hate themselves, and who need to get out of it, one doesn't want to encourage them in that attitude by using the language of self-hatred. I therefore think that such language should be avoided, on the whole, and that if anything the other language of praise and appreciation and admiration should be used instead. That's more skilful in this situation.

**Vajradaka:** On the psychological level?

**S:** Yes, on the psychological level. From the spiritual point of view self-hatred and self-praise ultimately come to the same thing [because both presuppose the existence of the empirical self, which ultimately has to be transcended]. It just depends which is needed at the moment, or which would be the more skilful attitude to encourage. Here in the West, with our background of sin and guilt and so on, I think we need much more praise and appreciation.

**Gisela:** Except that we also have a background of reward, but that's probably not so strong.

**S:** Even thinking in terms of reward isn't too bad, because a reward is something pleasant and positive, something that you can enjoy, at least for the time being. In the case of meditation, for instance, it's 'Practise meditation, and there will be a reward for all your effort and struggle. You'll enjoy peace of mind, and happiness.' That's all true, you will. There's no harm in using that language as far as it goes. When people are actually experiencing peace and happiness, as a result of practising meditation, then you can start talking about other things. But with so much psychological negativity around we have to be very careful not to increase it by using language which might have been all right in some other cultural context,

but which has perhaps for us a rather negative ring. It might encourage that psychological negativity. I certainly wouldn't advise you to talk to beginners' meditation classes in the way that Śāntideva talks. It would be most inappropriate. People might not even come again.

**Subhuti:** Most of the stuff in this book is like that. Some pieces have been quite depressing to me, even though I've known what they [really] mean, what the [true] significance is.

**S:** Perhaps Śāntideva is especially good for the strong craving type. Perhaps he was a strong craving type himself, who knows? He was a poet, so it is very likely. Asvaghosa doesn't have this negative attitude at all [even though, according to tradition, he also was a [257] poet, and the author of the *Buddhacarita*]. Does anyone remember *The Awakening of Faith*, which we studied at Order meetings some time ago? It was much more metaphysical than the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, but also very positive.

pp.104-105

There are thus in Buddhism three distinct and specific types of pride: (1) false pride ... overweening arrogance regarding self, (2) useful, healthy, wholesome pride in the right use of ambition (here defined as ultimate Enlightenment and the salvation of all beings), along with pride in *vīrya*, the confidence which one should have that he can achieve this ambition, and the pride of belonging to the Sangha, the body of those who are co-sharers of the ambition; and (3) the completion of pride, the pride of the Self-anti-self, which is taken in the achievement of the other.

**S:** This last pride in the activity, in the world, - in the universe, - of the Bodhichitta itself. Here the Bodhichitta is not regarded as you or yours, but as in a sense everybody's.

**Vajradaka:** So the first type of pride is negative and the other two are positive.

**S:** Right. The first is negative, spiritually speaking; the second is psychologically positive, and the last is spiritually positive. The psychologically positive can be the stepping-stone to the spiritually positive. [One could also say that the false pride is both psychologically and spiritually negative, useful pride psychologically positive but - in the ultimate sense - spiritually negative, and complete pride both psychologically and spiritually positive.]

p.105

The greatest paradox of Buddhism is that all is renounced for others, for the purpose that all, including others, may be renounced.

**S:** One ends up, as very often one does in Buddhist literature, with a paradox. But one mustn't puzzle about it too much, or try too hard to sort it out intellectually. The best way of looking at all this is the most concrete - that is to say, thinking of it in terms of the cloud about which we spoke, and of everybody working on that cloud regardless of whether it's one's own cloud or other people's: it's just a cloud of suffering, or a cloud of sorrow, and one wants to replace it with a cloud of joy, and happiness, and illumination, for everybody. That's the best and simplest way of looking at it, I think, and in any case that's what the Bodhisattva is really trying to do. What this whole section, in fact, is really saying, is, 'Be more objective. Don't be so influenced by purely subjective considerations. Be less selfish. This is what it really boils down to. Be more imaginative. Empathise more. Be more aware of other people, and of how they feel. This is what it means in plain practical terms, in terms of everyday life. And if you do meditations like the *mettā-bhāvanā*, that will help. When one goes to Chinese Buddhism from Indian Buddhism one can really see very clearly what the Chinese did. They made it all much more simple - less abstract, more concrete and, in a way, more practical. In other words, they made it more suited to the Chinese mind. Probably people in England - I

don't know about the West as a whole - are going to do something very similar with Buddhism. Perhaps the process has already started. [258]

**THE PERFECTION OF CONTEMPLATION**  
**(Text)**

## THE PERFECTION OF CONTEMPLATION

### The Text

p.196            28    When shall I dwell without a resting place, following my own inclinations, in broad natural places without attachments?

**S:** That's quite interesting. It's as though you've come now where you can let your natural desires flow quite freely because they've become quite wholesome and skilful. There's no question of conscious, deliberate checks any more. Obviously it's a fairly advanced stage, this stage of no attachments.

p.199            58    If you do not wish to touch the earth, and so forth, because it is smeared with excrement, how can you wish to touch that body from which the refuse is cast out?

**S:** This reminds me of a passage in my memoirs, describing how I went to a town called Tinnevely, in South India, where there was a river. In South India they don't have toilets inside the house, - they think this very disgusting, - so they all go to the bank of the river in the early morning. My companion and I spent the night at somebody's house, and at 5 o'clock the next morning our host took us with him down to the river. Each of us carried a little pot of water - that's the Indian custom, toilet paper being considered an abomination. When we reached the river it was still dark, and as the dawn came the river, with the mist on it, was a beautiful sight. As it became brighter, however, we saw all along the broad sandy bank thousands of people squatting. It was such a horrible contrast, especially just after the dawn. They were thoroughly polluting the whole place, and they did this every morning! When I asked our host the name of the river, he said, 'the Golden River!' It seemed so incongruous, but the picture remained with me ever since and I've given a description in my memoirs. Such scenes are very characteristic of South India. The reason why I've referred to the incident is because, if you are walking about in India, especially in places like the bank of the Golden River, you have to be very careful where you tread, so when Śāntideva says 'If you do not wish to touch the earth, and so forth, because it is smeared with excrement,' he presumably has in mind the sort of scene I have described. You have to be careful even if you walk along the edge of the road. That's the whole point of Śāntideva's (rhetorical) question. When you are out walking, for instance, you are very careful just where on the earth you put your feet, because you have no wish to come in contact with excrement. On other occasions, however, you behave in a quite different manner: you gleefully clasp the whole bag of excrement, i.e. somebody's body. Such behaviour, Śāntideva points out, is thoroughly inconsistent.

p.199            62    When dainty foods, the seasoning of boiled rice, camphor, and so forth, are thrown from the mouth and spit out, even the earth becomes impure.

**S:** This reminds me of something said by George Bernard Shaw: it's not only Śāntideva who entertains these feelings. Shaw says a human being is a machine for turning good food into bad manure. This is [259] quite a Śāntidevian kind of sentiment. This is what Śāntideva is getting at.

p.199            53    If you do not admit the excrement, [of your own body], although it is before your eyes, then observe the horrible bodies of others who have been thrown into a cemetery.

**S:** An Indian cemetery is not a place where people are buried - or very rarely so. In old times they were either cremated or, if they were too poor to afford the cost of the wood, - or if their families were too poor, - the body was simply flung into the cemetery, where it just rotted and was picked at by vultures.

p.199            64    When the skin splits open great fear arises as a consequence. How indeed can joy ever arise again after one has known what it is like to be in that place?

65    The perfume which pervades the body [of the corpse] is from sandalwood and not from anything else. Why are you attracted elsewhere because of the perfume belonging to another?

**S:** With regard to the cemetery, Śāntideva does tend to dwell on its loathsome aspects, rather than on the inspiring ones, and yet there is a quite different side to it. I've been in these places myself, and actually you don't notice the loathsomeness, and the smell and all that, so very much. This might sound strange, but at night, and especially if there's moonlight, the whole place becomes quite unnatural and what you are much more conscious of is a sort of mystery and awe, and a strange vibration in the air. It's not quite like being in a butcher's shop; in fact it's very different. Śāntideva seems to stress the loathsome aspects of death, and the cemetery, but not the inspiring and invigorating ones, which are very definitely also present. In that respect he's a bit one-sided, I think.

p.200            70    Having seen many skeletons, you might find that a cemetery is disgusting to you: But you delight in a village, which is a cemetery filled with walking skeletons.

**S:** This is, of course, a classic monastic exercise. When you go into the village for alms, and your attention is attracted by the delightful young maidens who are carrying their pitchers to the village well, this is how you are supposed to reflect. Clearly it is a medicine intended for a specific ailment, and one shouldn't universalise it into a general philosophy of life. It's a medicine to be used on certain occasions, as need arises.

p.200            72    The child has not the ability to earn: What pleasure is there in Youth? Youthfulness passes in earning. Grown old, what is done for pleasure?

**S:** That's a summary of ordinary, worldly life, if you like!

p.200            73    Some, who have evil desires, are thoroughly worn-out at the day's end because of their occupations. Coming home in the evening they lie down as if they were dead. [260]

**S:** It's not even as though you enjoy worldly life. If you got a kick out of it there might be some reason for engaging in it, but eventually you get thoroughly fed up with it and find that it simply exhausts you.

p.201            78    Some who are victims of desire are thrown on spikes and pierced ....

**S:** That was the punishment for adultery in ancient India.

p.201            79    Fortune, because of acquiring, protecting, and despairing of hope, is the most endless misfortune.

**S:** When I was in India I knew lots of Theravāda monks, and we often used to talk about the lay people (no doubt the lay people talked about the monks!), and the monks used to say, "Just look at these poor lay people! They are supposed to be enjoying all sorts of worldly pleasures, and having a good time, whereas we are supposed to have given up everything and they feel rather sorry for us, thinking that we don't have this and don't have that. But look how miserable they are!" It was, in fact, quite noticeable that the lay people were much less happy than the monks - always. You hardly ever saw a sad monk - the breed was practically unknown. Monks were usually cheerful, happy, lively, friendly, with lots of energy and so on. This was particularly noticeable if you saw a group of monks and a group of lay people side by side. The lay people were often tired, depressed, worried-looking, haggard, exhausted, etc., and they would often say (the men especially), "Oh you monks are so happy! How I wish I could be like you!" But strange to say they didn't really want to lead that kind of life. They saw quite clearly what it was like, and they envied the happiness of the monks, - not that the monks were highly spiritual, even: they were fairly ordinary people for the most part, despite the fact that they weren't leading a worldly life, - but if you were ever to say, "Well, what about becoming a monk and living in a monastery, then?" the reply would be, "Oh no, I couldn't do that!" Even though they were so miserable, and knew it and recognised it, they couldn't give up the world, couldn't give up their domestic pleasures. This was very noticeable, and my monk friends commented on it again and again. It's not that you very often have a good time in the world. Some monastic authors write as though the worldly person was revelling in pleasures all the time, or as though his whole life was one hectic round of enjoyment; but to the layman actually living that life this might have rather an ironic ring. At the same time, that very life is difficult to give up, even though it isn't very happy. It's easy enough to say, "Well, yes, the monk is much more happy than we are," but it's still almost impossible for you to become a monk - you don't think that life very attractive either. In a way you'd rather remain as you are.

p. 201            83     But Buddhahood is obtained by even a fraction of the effort required in hundreds of millions of years in the realms of rebirth.

**S:** If you accept the idea of rebirth, and it is this idea which is the context of Śāntideva's exhortation, then think of all the effort you have to put in just to earn your living and maintain your family, and survive such disasters as war and famine, not just for one lifetime but life after life for thousands of years. With just a fraction of that energy and effort you could gain Buddhahood. For one who believes in rebirth this is surely a most convincing argument.

p.201            86     Fortunate are those on delightful rock terraces, broad as palaces, cool as sandal and moonbeam; their minds are fanned by noiseless, delightful forest winds.

**S:** He must be thinking of the wonderful cave temples of Western India. Śāntideva himself belonged to that part of the country.

p.202            98     Surely it is a false calculation to think that there is an *ihī*, because it is another who has died and it is another who is born.

**S:** This is the way Śāntideva puts it, but strictly speaking this is not the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha quite clearly said that the *ēselfī* that is reborn is neither the same nor another. It's wrong to say that it is absolutely the same self persisting unchanged into a future existence; it's wrong to say that a completely new self arises. Neither identity nor difference is the truth but continuity, which is the middle term between the former two. Śāntideva is trying to close the gap between self and other by pointing out that we have just as much reason to protect the neighbour from injury, even though he is different from ourselves, as we have to protect our own future self from injury (by not performing evil actions) even though it is different from the present self. The present and the future bodies are of course different.

p.203 100 Even if unrelated, [sorrow] arises from the Ego-maker (ahamkāra). Whatever is unrelated, both to one's self or to another is to be annulled with all one's might.

**S:** It's that impersonal cloud of suffering. It's not *ëyourí* suffering, it's not *ëmyí* suffering, it's just suffering. There is suffering unrelated to any real self. We think of the suffering as related to me - as *ëmyí* suffering, or related to you - *ëyourí* suffering; but actually there's just suffering and no *ëselfí*, and so we just devote ourselves to getting rid of that as it were impersonal mass of suffering without bothering to think of it as *ëyoursí* or *ëmineí*. What is to be annulled, whether in the way of painful experiences or unskilful mental states, is simply that which is in reality *ëunrelatedí* - in other words the whole impersonal mass of suffering which does not really belong to anybody but which in a sense belongs to everybody.

p.203 102 All sorrows, without distinction, are ownerless; and because of misery they are to be prevented. Why then is restriction made?

**S:** Sorrows are *ëownerlessí* because they are not in reality either yours or mine. They are to be prevented *ëbecause of miseryí*, i.e. simply on account of the fact that they are sorrows, or in other words because [262] unhappiness is something to be got rid of anyway. It doesn't matter whose it is: it's just something negative. *ëWhy then is restriction made?í* That is, the restriction of *ëThis is my sorrow, that is your sorrow.í* It's just sorrow, and sorrow is something that needs to be got rid of regardless of whom it pertains to.

p.203 103 Why is sorrow to be prevented? - all are without disagreement [on this point]. And if it is to be prevented, then [let it be done] completely. Not just in myself. Everywhere!

**S:** There's absolutely universal agreement about this. Everybody wishes that unhappiness could be removed. Unhappiness may mean different things for different people, but the actual experience of pain and suffering, everybody would agree, is something that should be removed, by whatsoever resource.

p.203 107 Consequently [the Bodhisattvas, the compassionate], having transformed their mentalities (*samtana*), delighting in the tranquilising of another's sorrow, plunge into the Avici hell like wild geese (*hamsa*) into a cluster of lotus.

**S:** You have to be really a Bodhisattva to be able to do that! For it's very difficult even to enter into a relatively painful and negative situation in a positive manner, not to speak of plunging into Avici hells as though they were beds of lotuses. We can't think of these things for quite a few lives to come.

p.203 108 When beings are delivered it is for them an ocean of joy which overwhelms all: What good is the insipid deliverance [of an Arhat or a Pratyekabuddha]?

**S:** This is again a question of Kanchenjunga being a bit lower than Everest. It's all right for *Šántideva* to make these remarks, but not for us to feel any superiority to Arahants or Pratyekabuddhas. [Such an attitude would be totally inappropriate. On the contrary, we ought to feel the utmost reverence for Arahants and Pratyekabuddhas, thinking how immeasurably greater their spiritual attainments are than our own.]

p.204 112 So why should the body of another not be taken as my own? It is not difficult, because of the remoteness of my own body.

**S:** Your own body is an object to your mind just like the bodies of others, so it shouldn't be very difficult to start treating the bodies of others in the same way that you treat your own.

p.204 115 Since the thought of 'self' habitually is located in one's own body, although this has no selfhood, then why is selfhood not habitually conceived to be in others?

**S:** It sometimes helps when we happen to have had an experience of being 'out of the body,' because then you realise that the body isn't you. It's just an object 'out there,' and it's related to you in much the same way that the bodies of other people are, so that there doesn't seem to be any real reason for preferring your own body 'out there' to [263] other people's bodies 'out there.' Ideally, you should look after them all equally.

p.204 118 Thus the Lord Avalokita has given his own name to protect a man from even the fear of being timid in the assembly.

**S:** This I assume means that he has given his mantra for repetition. [A mantra is regarded as the name of the Buddha, Bodhisattva, etc., concerned because it is by repeating his mantra that the devotee invokes his 'presence,' just as it is by calling out somebody's name that we cause him to come to us.]

p.205 125 One thinks, 'What shall I eat if I make an offering?' 'For the sake of the 'self' he becomes a demon. One thinks, 'What shall I give if I eat?' 'For the sake of another he becomes the King of the Gods.

**S:** The offering referred to is a food-offering. The selfish person is concerned about making an offering in case he should have nothing left to eat himself. On account of his selfishness he is reborn as a demon in hell. The unselfish person is concerned about eating in case he should have nothing left with which to make an offering. On account of his unselfishness he is reborn in heaven as the King of the Gods.

p.205 126 Having injured himself for the sake of another, he is endowed with all prosperity.

**S:** 'Injured himself' mustn't be taken too literally. In Buddhism you are not advised actually to injure yourself in any way, but rather to look after yourself objectively, without attachment.

p.205 130 But why so much speaking? Let the difference be seen which is between the fool who is concerned with his own benefits, and the sage (*muni*) who creates benefit for others.

**Mike:** Is that another dig at the Hīnayāna?

**S:** I don't think so. It could be, but I think Śāntideva is concerned simply with selfish and unselfish people in general. The term *muni* is, if anything, rather Hīnayānaic.

p.207 148 May my virtues become manifest everywhere in the world; But whatever virtues he may have, let them not be heard anywhere.

**S:** Śāntideva has now thoroughly identified himself with the other. His own former *ëselfí* becomes the other to him and the former *ëotherí* becomes his own self.

p.208                    158    Therefore, as You located the Ego-maker (*ahamkāra*)  
in drops of sperm and of blood, in things belonging to  
another, so now let it be found in others.

**S:** Before rebirth [i.e. at the time of conception] your consciousness identified itself with the semen and the blood - or, as we would say, with the spermatozoon and the ovum - of the future parents, even though [264] the semen and the blood were then objects which had nothing at all to do with you. Yet your consciousness regarded them as *ëmeí* and in that way you were reborn. You should now do the same thing with other people: you should transfer your consciousness to them and as it were become them. Regard yourself as being them, and turn against your so-called former self. In this way, get rid of your selfishness. This is Śāntideva's rather subtle argument.

p.209                    171    Indeed, if heedlessly I do not give you to beings, you,  
without hesitation, will deliver me to the guards of  
hell.

**S:** He puts himself in an existential position: Either I get the *ëselfí* or the *ëselfí* gets me. That's the sort of position he's got himself into. Those are the alternatives. If the *ëselfí* gets me it will drag me, as it were, off to hell, so I've got to get the *ëselfí* before it gets me.

p.209                    173    The *ìselfî* is not to be loved if the *ìselfî* is loved by  
you. If the *ìselfî* is to be protected it ought not to be  
concerned with its protection.

**S:** It's a paradox. If you really love yourself, don't love yourself. Selflessness, or unselfishness, is the best way to happiness for you - for the self. We don't usually realise that, but that's our delusion.

What the whole section, - indeed the whole *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, boils down to is this: With the help of urgent expostulations and rather subtle arguments Śāntideva is trying to talk us into being at least a little bit more unselfish - into considering the sorrows and sufferings of others as our own, and being sensitive to them as we are to our own. In other words, he is trying to talk us into devoting ourselves - in the Bodhisattva spirit - to helping relieve the whole mass of human suffering without going too much into whether it's your suffering, or my suffering, or anybody else's suffering. There's a big black cloud hanging over the whole human race, and it needs to be dispelled by the united efforts of us all.

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