

Sangharakshita in Seminar

THE PRECEPTS OF THE GURUS (First Seminar)

Section One: *The Ten Causes of Regret*

[Text to be found in 'A *Buddhist Bible*' edited by Dwight Goddard, published by Harrap, London, 1956 (Also published by Beacon Press, 1970.)]

Held in: September 1978

Those Present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Sagaramati, Sona, Kamalasila, Vajradaka, Mangala, Ajita, Anoma, Devamitra, Kulamitra, Siddhiratna, Subhuti, Manjuvajra

Tape 1

S: Alright then. So - 'The Precepts of the Gurus.' [Pause] I have chosen this particular text, partly because of it's length and partly because of the way in which it's arranged, and as we'll be probably having these seminars for Chairmen indefinitely, that's to say, I hope, every, say three or four months, we'll be able just to carry on with the text, doing perhaps two or three chapters; discussing the verses in some detail, some depth, every time we meet for a week-end or three days.

So let's just start straight off, with somebody reading. Read the little Foreword, somebody, and then maybe the verses we can read just going round the circle. I think read the whole chapter through; then we'll discuss each verse individually and then discuss general considerations arising out of the chapter.

Mangala: About the Introduction - I don't know if that's in the 'Buddhist Bible' or not - it's an Introduction in the 'Tibetan Yoga' book.

S: No, there isn't an Introduction here. No, I think we'll just plunge straight into the Precepts themselves - not take too much notice of what Dr. Evans-Wentz has said - though obviously you can go through that separately if you want to.

_____ : Page 600, isn't it?

S: This is page 600.

Sagaramati:

THE SUPREME PATH, THE ROSARY OF PRECIOUS GEMS

*'Obeisance to the Honoured Guru!
[The Foreword]*

Let him who desireth deliverance from the fearful and difficult-to-traverse Sea of Successive Existences, by means of the precepts taught by the inspired Kargyutpa Sages, render due homage to these Teachers, whose glory is immaculate, whose virtues are as inexhaustible as the ocean, and whose infinite benevolence embraceth all beings, past, present, and future, throughout the Universe.

For the use of those who share in the quest for Divine Wisdom there follow, recorded in writing, the most highly esteemed precepts, called The Supreme Path, the Rosary of Precious Gems, transmitted to Gampopa, either directly or indirectly, through that Inspired Dynasty of Gurus, out of their love for him. □

S: I take it everybody knows what the Kargyutpa School is. And who Gampopa is - Gampopa being, of course, the author of *'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation'* □ and, in a sense, the leading disciple of Milarepa. These Precepts, or aphorisms, seem to have been collected from various sources but handed down, as it were, through Gampopa.

All right then, let's go on to the first chapter.

'THE TWENTY-EIGHT CATEGORIES OF YOGIC PRECEPTS.

1. The Ten Causes of Regret.

The devotee seeking Liberation and the Omniscience of Buddhahood should first meditate upon these ten things which are causes of regret:

(1) Having obtained the difficult-to-obtain, free and endowed human body, it would be a cause of regret to fritter life away.

(2) Having obtained this pure and difficult-to-obtain, free, and endowed human body, it would be a cause of regret to die an irreligious and worldly man.'

S: Let us read a verse - going round.

'(3) This human life in the Kali-Yuga (or Age of Darkness) being so brief and uncertain, it would be a cause of regret to spend it in worldly aims and pursuits.

(4) One's own mind being of the nature of the Dharmakaya, it would be a cause of regret to let it be swallowed up in the morass of the world's illusions.

(5) The holy guru being the guide on the path, it would be a cause of regret to be separated from him before attaining Enlightenment.

(6) Religious faith and vows being the vessel which conveyeth one to Emancipation, it would be a cause of regret were they to be shattered by the force of uncontrolled passions.

(7) The Perfect Wisdom having been found within oneself in virtue of the guru's grace, it would be a cause of regret to dissipate it amidst the jungle of worldliness.

(8) To sell like so much merchandise the Sublime Doctrine of the Sages would be a cause of regret.

(9) Inasmuch as all beings are our kindly parents, it would be a cause of regret to have aversion for and thus disown or abandon any of them.

(10) The prime of youth being the period of development of the body, speech, and mind, it would be a cause of regret to waste it in vulgar indifference.

S: So, 'The Ten Causes of Regret.' 'The devotee seeking Liberation and the Omniscience of Buddhahood should first meditate upon these ten things which are causes of regret.' So, 'Having obtained the difficult-to obtain, free, and endowed human body, it would be a cause of regret to fritter life away.' So, does anyone have a very clear idea as to what is meant by this 'difficult-to-obtain, free, and endowed human body'? What about it being 'difficult-to-obtain'? How is that generally understood?

Kamalasila: Well there are so many other possibilities of rebirth.

_____ : [Inaudible]

S: Right, yes. What about 'free and endowed.'? Free from what - endowed with what?

_____ : Free from the lower realms.

S: Yes. I'm going to read now a Tibetan exposition of the traditional listing of the freedoms and endowments and then we can discuss those in detail where necessary. So, what are the Eight Freedoms? These Eight Freedoms are divided into two groups of four each. There are four Freedoms from fetters within human existence - that is to say, conditions which prevent the practise of the Dharma. So, freedom from 'Firmly holding wrong views, such as,' - I'm giving the translation here as it stands - 'Atheism, Nihilism, or disbelief in the law of cause and effect. (2) Birth in a totally non-religious or barbaric land. (3) Birth in a land where no Buddhist Dharma is taught. Birth as a demented or mute person.

Then there are the Four Freedoms from non-human types of birth - birth in a hell, a birth in a preta realm, birth as an animal lacking the power to discriminate between virtuous and non-virtuous action, and birth as a long-life Deva with so much pleasure that there is no motivation to practise the Dharma.

So these are the Eight Freedoms. And then, the Ten Endowments - five personal endowments and five circumstantial ones. The personal ones are - Birth as a human being, which gives one the potential to obtain Liberation. (2) Birth where the Dharma flourishes, or in a central land - we'll see what this means in a minute - (3) Birth with a body having all five sense intact. (4) Birth into life free from the five heinous crimes. (5) Having respect for the Three Baskets of the Dharma, which include the Vinaya or moral discipline, the Sutras or Discourses, and the Abhidharma or the Wisdom Teaching of the Buddha.

Then the Five Circumstantial Enjoyments - the presence of a Buddha during the time in which one lives; the presence of the Dharma of the Lord Buddha; the flourishing of the practise of the Dharma; then (4) the existence of the Monastic Order, and (5) being under the care of the compassionate person or patron or teacher who looks after one in one's practice.

So, - I think we'd better go through these one by one - in this way we'll get quite a clear idea, quite a detailed idea of what is meant by 'the difficult-to-obtain, free, and endowed human body,' the assumption being that having set off on the Path one in fact has this 'difficult-to-obtain, free, and endowed human body.' So, free from what, first of all? There are Eight Freedoms - that is to say, freedom from eight particular things - eight fetters, which make it difficult, even impossible, for one to evolve.

'Firmly holding wrong views, such as atheism, nihilism, or disbelief in the law of cause and effect.' This is the first thing from which one has to be free, if one wishes to seek after Liberation, and the Omniscience of Buddhahood.

Mangala: Would you just repeat those four again, Bhante? Atheism, Nihilism....

S: Well, this is just the translation which is given here - Atheism, Nihilism, or disbelief in the law of cause and effect. So, what are these views?

_____ : Atheism is not one ... [inaudible]

S: It is - so what do you think is meant by that?

_____ : [inaudible]

S: No, I wouldn't say that.

_____ : Materialism.

S: Materialism, virtually, yes - because in the Pali Texts you very frequently get a sort of list in this kind of context, either in a negative form or a positive form, that somebody, for instance, believes, or does not believe, in the existence of Enlightened Beings in the world. Well, I mean, in English, atheism implies belief in God, so clearly it's totally inappropriate here. That itself would be a fetter - not the other way around. So, the fetter here consists in disbelief in there being anywhere, human beings who have attained a higher state of consciousness, or even Enlightenment. If you don't believe that there is at least - well this was how it was put in the Buddha's day - at least one being who had attained Enlightenment, then that is a fetter for you, because if you don't believe that anyone ever has attained or is now in a state of having attained Enlightenment, you can't really tread the Path very vigorously or enthusiastically yourselves. So we often get this sort of statement in the Pali texts - yes, in a threefold form; first of all that one believes or does not believe that there are Buddhas in the world; beings who have attained a higher state of consciousness. One believes or does not believe in the utility of gifts, and one believes or does not believe in the law of Karma - that actions have consequences, that willed actions have consequences. This is usually how it's put in the Pali Canon.

So, really it suggests that one, as it were, needs to believe that there is a higher spiritual state or higher transcendental state to be attained and that beings actually have attained it, but also, that there is a possibility of making an effort in that direction, under a law in accordance with which the results of one's efforts can be conserved, so that they, as it were, progressively accumulate - that the Universe is not fortuitous. Do you see what I mean? So, in the Pali Canon, therefore, you get these three things - usually, as far as I recollect, it goes like this - that there are Buddhas in the world, Enlightened Beings in the world - that there is a result to giving, and that actions in general, in fact willed actions, do have consequences. The fact that actions do have consequences could be taken to refer to the utility of supporting with gifts those who are leading the holy life. It could refer to that.

_____ : I don't quite catch that.

S: Because those who have given up the world and who are dependent on others for alms are referred to as a 'Field of Merit', and that there is a fruit in making offerings to them - it is something worthwhile to do. It could be looked at in that way. And then, of course, belief in the general law of Karma - that willed actions do have consequences. So unless one has got this sort of basic foundation of belief, as it were, it's hardly possible to set out on the Spiritual Path. So, therefore, if one has wrong views, such as atheism, Nihilism, or disbelief in the law of cause and effect, that is a fetter.

Siddhiratna: So the atheism is a disbelief in the existence of an Enlightened Being. It always struck me that if there were Enlightened Beings etc., that it's surprising that their effect hasn't been more widely registered, as it were.

S: But why should it be surprising?

Siddhiratna: Because if it's glorious and holy and spiritual etc., one takes these things to be the highest that one can achieve and you'd expect the effect of them to be quite pronounced. It always seemed like that to me.

S: Yes, but how is the effect produced? What is the effect produced on? That is the point.

Siddhiratna: Presumably you come to the situation... can one actually understand what the effect is? Is one sufficiently developed to understand the effect?

S: No, I wouldn't even say that. It's - for instance, if you exert, say, mechanical pressure, it must have a result. But can you exert spiritual pressure?

Vajradaka: You can have influence.

S: Is influence pressure? This is what it boils down to.

_____ : It depends on the people that are around at the time.....

S: It depends on the people around. You cannot exert an influence which will automatically have an effect. You can't, because people have got the freedom to resist your influence, whereas in the case of mechanical pressure it is not possible to resist it - it must have an effect in one way or another. Whereas in the case of spiritual influence it can be resisted - well, one can't even say that - by its very nature there's no question of it either being resisted or not being resisted - it doesn't exert a pressure; it is there, and those who wish can open themselves to it. Yes, you could say it's wonderful that the influence does not seem to be more manifest, but it's not that there is anything lacking in the influence, but that it's wonderful that people don't, for their own sakes, open themselves to it.

Siddhiratna: That's the unusual thing.

S: That is the unusual thing. But it's just the darkness and blindness of most human beings. But we shouldn't sort of put the question in a form that suggests that the influence is some sort of power that operates, as it were, automatically, and which people couldn't resist even if they wanted to. So that if there aren't more Enlightened people, if that influence hasn't succeeded in producing great results, there's something, as it were, lacking in the influence itself. It's not powerful in the mechanical sense. But the question, if you put it in that way, suggests that it is powerful in, as it were, the mechanical sense, and that if it isn't producing sufficient, as it were, mechanical results there's something wrong with it - something lacking - but it is not a power or an influence in that sense at all.

It's like saying, 'Well look, this king is supposed to be so powerful, why isn't everybody obeying him?'. Well, in the case of a king you could say that, because he operates with power, but the Enlightened person doesn't operate with power. He operates with influence, which is something which can be resisted in the sense that people can refuse to open and some don't.

_____ : [inaudible]

S: Yes. This is what I said, you know, not so very long ago - that even the most ordinary and unenlightened person has got the capacity to undo the work of a Buddha; or making the work of a

Buddha of no effect.

Siddhiratna: You mean on themselves.

S: On themselves - yes.

Mangala: Why is this retreat not taking off? Perhaps we've got to do more meditation. (Laughter)

S: Yes. I think most people who've had to give a public lecture have found this, that sometimes the audience is dull and unresponsive and will not respond. You can try - you can tell your humorous stories, you can put your points quite strongly and powerfully and you can be as clear as you like, but they're just not in a mood to respond and there's nothing you can do about it. So, one mustn't reproach oneself when one has done one's best. Maybe a Buddha could have done more - you don't know - maybe even a Buddha couldn't have done more. But there's something got to be done by the audience itself - it's not your fault - you've done your bit. So, you should not reproach yourself that you've been unable to make the audience respond. Nobody can do that - they've got to make themselves respond, and if they don't want to there's not a thing you can do about it. You just have to accept the fact that you cast your good seed on stony soil. Perhaps a seed did fall here and there, into a little patch of soil that was a bit more receptive and perhaps it'll bear fruit later on; you just remain open to that possibility; you don't write it off as a completely wasted evening.

So, the atheism here would seem to consist in disbelief in the existence, if not in the present, certainly in the past, of Enlightened Beings. The nihilism would seem to be '*ucchedavada*' - that there is no life after death - that when you die you just come to a full stop.

And then, disbelief in the law of cause and effect, especially in its karmic form.

So, in other words, wrong views are those views - wrong views from the spiritual point of view - are those views which undermine the spiritual life itself. So that if you hold those views you cannot, in fact, lead a spiritual life.

And the Second Freedom - 'Freedom from birth in a totally non-religious or barbaric land.' What do you think is meant by this? This is distinct from birth in a land where the Buddhist Dharma is not taught - that is the next Freedom.

_____ : Would you repeat that.

S: '2. Birth in a totally non-religious or barbaric land.'

Sagaramati: I suppose you could call it culture.

S: Culture; yes, this seems to stand for culture. 'Religious' in 'non-religious' here meaning, presumably the ethnic religious and the 'barbaric' the totally uncultivated, uncultured, savage, uncivilised, environment. So, why do you think that is important? To be born into a cultured as distinct from an uncultured environment.

Vajradaka: Culture gives you the whole language of concepts and ideas. Imagination.

S: And also, presumably, it suggests a certain degree of emotional refinement.

Devamitra: Would that also be equivalent to being, say, reborn in a culture which is in a state of decline - serious decline?

S: Well, that raises the question of what does one mean by a culture in a state of decline.

Devamitra: Well, I mean, one can draw a parallel with our present culture, Western Culture, which is now dominated by material values.

S: I think we have to be a little careful here, because most cultures are really, when it comes down to it, dominated by material values. I think one has to look a little more closely at the old concept of, say, 'a barbaric land'. In a sense all lands are barbaric; in the sense that it is material values that usually do dominate, in effect. But it would seem that the difference between the barbaric and the non-barbaric is more in respect of the availability of culture for those who want it. Do you see what I mean? In a barbaric land culture is just not available, even if you do want it it's not anywhere to be found. But in a non-barbaric land it may not be dominant - you may not be living in a totally cultural environment where cultural values are uppermost - but culture is available to you, for your development as an individual, if you need it and if you are prepared to go a little bit in search of it. For instance, how would you regard London, how would you classify London? Is it a barbaric land or a non-barbaric land? Well, it's both; for some of the people who live here it's a barbaric land; it's a place of betting shops and factories and all the rest of it. For others it's a place of art galleries and museums and concerts. Do you see what I mean? So, I think we should probably think of the barbaric land in terms of a place where culture is just not available at all - where there's no means of access to culture.

Siddhiratna: What would be an example? Can you give an example? Would it be some sort of tribal... New Guinean tribes, for instance?

S: But again that raises the question of the nature of culture. A tribe may have a culture. I would say probably a good example of a barbaric land would be some tribes where there's no culture, even in the tribal sense, where they spend much of their time fighting and quarrelling, and so on; or, say, an industrial city, where there was no library, no museum, no art gallery, no concerts or anything of that sort; that would really be a barbaric environment. But again, of course, in modern times, the situation has been altered by the mere fact of increased facility of communication. You may be born in a barbaric environment, whether it corresponds to a poor country or not, but it's much more easy for you to get out of it nowadays. In the old days, if there wasn't a library in your village, well you'd had it. There was not much chance of getting out of your village perhaps, but now it doesn't matter. Even if your village doesn't have a library, well there's a library certainly within thirty, forty, or fifty miles, which you can get to if you really want to.

Siddhiratna: Barbaric seems to suggest sort of pre-human or Neanderthal....

S: Yes, we do get references, say, in the Pali Canon to 'barbaric border areas', where there is no respect for holy men, and so on. But those perhaps nowadays are to be found in the so-called industrialised countries, in the big industrial cities where there's an absolute minimum of cultural activity of any kind. But I think the whole term now has becoming quite relative - a 'barbaric country' - it's probably 'barbaric spots', which are scattered here and there, interspersed with maybe highly cultured spots.

I mentioned London; well, in London, you've got these different kinds of spots, you know, just mixed up together, one touching the other.

Siddhiratna: Backing onto the other.

S: Backing onto the other - yes. *[Pause]*

Sona: Would you say it's not possible to have a completely cultured society?

S: I would say probably not - if you mean by that a society in which cultural values, that is to say, values of the higher culture are dominant - no, I don't think it is. For instance, if you take the case of this country - only a very rough and ready sort of way of measuring - how much do we spend on the arts every year? How many millions?

Devamitra: Four percent compared with some other European countries.

S: Well, take the European countries that spend most - and then ask, 'well how much do they spend on armaments?' Not to mention other things. So this will give one a clue. I mean, the amount of money one spends on things, relatively. So, can one speak of cultural values being dominant, when on culture - and maybe it is a bit of a limitation to limit it to just the arts in that sort of sense, but leaving that aside - isn't it very revealing when you spend so small a proportion of your national income on those things compared with others; they can't be regarded therefore as dominant in your society, can they? You spend the money on the things that you believe in, or the things that you think are necessary. Well maybe armaments are necessary, but that is a reflection then on the state of the world as a whole. Even if you add, say, to the few millions that the state spends, maybe add on to that the few millions that are spent say at Christies and Sotherbys by wealthy patrons of the arts and so on - add to all that the museums and art galleries spend out of their own resources - add all that up, it will only be a tiny fraction of what is spent on all sorts of other things of no cultural significance at all. So, we can't really say that in any society as far as I know at present, cultural values are dominant.

You probably might find that in the long run a country like India spent more on the arts than any other country because so much is spent privately for cultural and religious things. The government certainly doesn't spend very much, but a lot is spent by private individuals, by families, on various traditional things.

So possibly - I don't know - but possibly they've spent a higher percentage of the Gross National Product in that sort of way than many a wealthy industrialised country. But never mind, they're progressing!

So, this goes to show that some of the old Buddhist concepts are being greatly altered by the changes that have taken place in recent years. Even this conception of 'a totally non-religious or barbaric land'. I mean, some people would say that Soviet Russia is 'a totally non-religious or barbaric land', but in Russia you have access to concerts, art galleries, access to the ballet, opera, all the rest of it, no less than in any other part of the world.

Siddhiratna: So, you're saying that you have to take the old Buddhist concept of 'barbaric' and look at it in the light of say....

S: Yes - not just 'barbaric', but 'barbaric land', because there has been this change of communications - one 'land' is not so much isolated from another, they interpenetrate. Also, formerly, you can say that whatever culture there was, was the property almost, of an aristocracy, or an élite of some kind. I mean, had we lived say two hundred or three hundred years ago we wouldn't have found it so easy to listen to Mozart. You had the opportunity of listening to Mozart if you belonged to an aristocracy, or maybe in some parts of the Western world, two hundred years ago, if you belonged to the wealthier sections of the middle class. Public concerts were just beginning to be developed then, but before that, who had the chance of listening to good music - apart from what you heard in Churches? You didn't ever have the possibility of listening to it in your own home - every week, every day, if you wanted to. So the situation has quickly changed now, and changed for the better in many ways. Culture is much more widely diffused, it's much more widely available; so perhaps in the old sense

there's no longer a barbaric country existing anywhere.

So everybody is in a much more favourable position than before in this respect. The only regrettable feature is that they very often don't make use of the opportunity, don't make use of the facilities that they undoubtedly do have.

Siddhiratna: You can possibly transpose 'barbaric attitude' for 'barbaric land'.

S: Yes, quite, yes, yes. You could be born, for instance, into a family that was really quite barbaric, when nobody had any interest in the arts, or in culture generally, or in education - and discouraged you from having any such interest or ridiculed your interest if you did show any; and really put you off those things; or conditioned you against them in some way; or made you ashamed, almost, to pursue your interest in them. That would be a very unfortunate situation.

Ajita: People come to meditation centres and from this they get a feel of our culture.

S: Yes.

Ajita: [unclear] they realise Mozart and Vivaldi you know, big painters. Do you think meditation in itself could be an (unclear) our culture.

S: Well, it's the question of individual development. If you start thinking in terms of individual development and if you've taken up meditation as a means to individual development, then, having got into meditation you'll naturally start thinking well what other means of individual development there are. Or you might start feeling your own sort of emotional coarseness, your own emotional insensitivity, and you might start wondering well, you know, how can I improve myself in that respect? Then you might start thinking in terms of the arts, in terms of culture - to help yourself in that way. So I think that if one gets into the spiritual life, to a certain extent at least, even though one may not ever paint or write poetry you will get to some extent into culture as well, at least as a means of your own emotional refinement. You might also be sufficiently refined emotionally anyway without having had any experience of culture, so you might not need it, not that it's inevitable or necessary for everybody. But, no doubt, for a lot of people it would be very useful, having come, say into meditation, to develop the interest in the arts - as different aspects of the same process of individual development.

Alright then - '(3) Freedom from birth in a land where no Buddhist Dharma is taught.' Well, the importance of this freedom is obvious, isn't it? You could be free from wrong views, you could be born in a cultured environment, but what would be the use, in a sense, if you were born in an environment where the Buddha Dharma is not taught. It says here 'taught', you know, which presumably means actively taught by a living individual, not just where the books are available. But here again, here the situation has changed from what it used to be. In a sense the books are available, of course - much more widely than ever before, and teaching is also available, more widely, in a global sense, than ever before - you've got a much better chance of encountering the Dharma now than you had in the past, certainly in the West.

And then, fourthly - 'Freedom from birth as a demented or mute person'. Because, even supposing you were free from wrong views, free from birth in a totally non-religious or barbaric land and free from birth in a land where no Buddhist Dharma was taught, that wouldn't help you very much if you were born demented or mute, so that you are unable to communicate.

Manjuvajra: Mute there meaning unable to communicate rather than not being able to talk. Like, somebody might be able not to talk, but he might be able to write or operate a sign language.

S: Probably they have in mind all those things, because, you know, in the early days in Buddhism there was no writing of religious 'texts' as we call them now; everything was by word of mouth; you had to learn everything orally. So if one were to change that one would say 'well, what would be the use even of being born in a Buddhist environment if you were deaf, dumb and blind.' You could perhaps, as someone like Helen Keller has, get over that, but it's a tremendous handicap; you need all your senses. *[Pause]*

So these are the Four Freedoms from fetters within human existence. And then there are Four Freedoms from non-human types of birth, and these are 'Freedom from birth in a Hell region where suffering is continuous; from birth in a Preta realm where continual hunger and desire prevent any practice of the Dharma; birth as an animal lacking the power to discriminate between virtuous and non-virtuous actions, and birth as a long-life Deva with so much pleasure that there is no motivation to practise the Dharma'.

Do you think you could transpose these four from the, as it were, cosmological to the, as it were, psychological? Do you think that would be possible?

_____ : Yes.

End of side one side two

S: In what way? How would you transpose the first? 'Birth in a Hell region where suffering is continuous'.

Kamalasila: By intense mental suffering.

S: Or even physical suffering. The only difference being difference between the cosmological and the psychological - but in the case of the cosmological you don't get out of it, you get out of it only with death, only with decease from that realm, but in the case of the psychological you could get out of it; you might get out of it, rather. It doesn't necessarily last for your whole lifetime - not in all cases, anyway.

And what about 'Birth in the Preta Realm'? What might that correspond to psychologically?

_____ : Intense neurosis. Or, intense attachment to material things.

S: Yes. (Pause). And birth as an animal?

_____ : Even being, sort of - I was going to say, being a hippie, being indecisive in a moral kind of way.

S: It says 'Lacking the power to discriminate'. Animals lack the power. Would you say that of your hippie, that he actually lacks the power?

_____ : Sometimes, yes. (Laughter)

Sagaramati: Only in terms of the external influences.

S: But he could be brought to another attitude, through the right influences, presumably.

_____ : Yes.

Devamitra: So it's more just a completely uncultured person - someone with no sense of cultural values (unclear)

S: I think it's very similar to that.

Sagaramati: That could be just because of conditioning.

S: Though it does seem in the case of some human beings, that they are very animal-like, yes? I'm thinking of these pathological criminals, who seem to have no idea of right and wrong, so we are told. They're not aware that they've done, don't feel that they've done anything wrong, and therefore are not sorry for what they have done.

_____ : They're more the tigers, whereas the hippies are more the pussy cats.

Ajita: Politicians live in that realm, the animal realm.

S: No, I wouldn't say that. I think they do have the power to discriminate, but very often they stifle it.

Vajradaka: So, recklessness seems to be a characteristic of this sort of animal... inability to discriminate.

S: A purely instinctual existence.

Mangala: Do you consider that the Preta Realm - I think that's perhaps the nearest enemy that we've got, probably.

S: When you say we?

Mangala: I suppose I mean people in the Friends, and people with some sort of cultural development.

S: What about number four that we haven't come to yet - the Deva Realm - 'birth as a long life Deva with so much pleasure that there is no motivation to practise the Dharma'. So, what does that correspond to in this life itself, in the human realm? Does it correspond to the rich? Probably not, because they have to worry about their wealth (laughter) and all that sort of thing.

Manjuvajra: There was an article about Christina Onassis in the paper recently, and one thing that struck me, reading that, was that if you've got a lot of money you can always satisfy superficial needs, even friends - if you get fed up with your friends you can easily get some new ones - and while you've always got the power to do that you're never going to start to really look at even yourself psychologically. So while you've got that power you've got no chance of developing.

Mangala: I don't know if that's true though. I think you might sort of reach a pitch and think well, I've had millions, I'm fed up with cars and all the rest, jet plane and all the rest, you just begin to see....

S: If you have some sort of experience that causes you - for instance there was an interview on the radio the other day, with that very wealthy French or Belgian industrialist who had been kidnapped by - I forget who it was - but he'd been held for 40 or 60 odd days, quite a long time - and the tip of his finger had been cut off, and a huge ransom had been paid; he's worth about sixty million pounds, or something like that - and he was interviewed by a whole lot of reporters, and he made the point that his whole attitude to life had been changed by this experience, and he was asked to give an example, and he said 'Well, before, I would just have been afraid to meet a whole lot of reporters like this', he said, 'but when you've been tied up for 60 days, and when you haven't known that the next moment might not be your last, and when you've been hooded all the time, when you've had that sort

of experience, you've gone through all that, well, just meeting you guys is nothing'. (Laughter). So that's just an example, and he said he's certainly not going to live as he lived before. Apparently he is going to run his companies and all that as before but there has been some change nonetheless. So I think if you're sort of rich in this sort of way, or in this sort of Deva-like position, you very rarely change unless there's something intervening from outside, something catastrophic to shake you up. Even then, of course, some people don't learn. But 'birth as a long life Deva with so much pleasure that there's no motivation to practise the Dharma,' - it's pleasure, you know, not money; if money provides the pleasure, yes OK money too - but it's pleasure, and you can live a life of pleasure with very little money in fact.

Siddhiratna: Could you say, Bhante, that (inaudible) living in ivory towers and wrapped up in themselves - in almost a neurotic way. You almost feel they know everything there is to know and it's all so refined and aesthetic and whatever, there's no *dukkha* there, there's no experience of *dukkha*.

S: Do you think this might not apply to people living in the Welfare State? In a sense, for some people at least, it's almost a Deva-like existence.

Devamitra: You get that sort of feeling from the people who go to the hippie fairs which I've been involved with. I've got the impression they have quite an easy and happy sort of time, smoking the dope they manage to get and living on the dole and making a few crafts. There's no real pressures on them at all, and they seem quite happy sort of people on the whole.

S: But not making any effort to evolve - they're not evolving.

Devamitra: Yeah.

Manjuvajra: You notice - I mean, I've noticed it particularly in Cornwall - Cornwall is a real Deva realm - so beautiful to live there - wonderful country - and the weather.

Siddhiratna: I get confused about this, because, if that's all there - I mean I'm not sure about the (unclear) and whatever, but if you're in Cornwall and the weather's nice and you're just sort of relaxed; it's a bit like living in Padmaloka maybe. You know, it's very pleasant. The only thing they don't do, which we probably do do, is meditate. I mean they may well read books, it may not be Buddhist books - culturally good books. The only thing that seems to be a difference between what we may do and what those other people may do is that we meditate and they don't. Is that sort of give us enough reason to classify them as not evolving.

Anoma: It's not just a question of meditation surely - it's one's whole motivation.

S: Yes, because even the meditation can be just pleasant. I mean you can sit just for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening, and just enjoy a pleasant state. That would not be enough really to evolve.

Siddhiratna: So therefore what you're saying is it has to involve this third (inaudible) you were talking about, which is the Enlightened state.

S: Well no - as Anoma says, it's the motivation. You have to not only meditate, but have Enlightenment, or an Enlightened state as the goal of your meditation. It needs to be oriented in that way - not that you're just, as it were, indulging in meditation because it's so pleasant. I mean, it is pleasant - of course it is. But it's not the pleasure that's the end, it's the Enlightenment that is the end.

Sona: Perhaps a Buddhist monastery could deteriorate into a Deva-like realm if the people stopped trying to evolve and used it as a sort of career.

S: The only thing is that, as I've seen in monasteries, that can happen, but the essence of the Deva-like life is pleasure. And in monasteries, if at least some appearance of monasticism is kept up there's no pleasure in the sense of the crude or more common human pleasures, and if you aren't meditating and enjoying, as it were, more heavenly pleasures, neither are you enjoying the grosser human pleasures, well it really ceases to be a Deva-loka in any case. It just becomes dull and listless and boring, and there are monasteries like that.

So, it raises the very important question of what is the motivation for leading a spiritual life or trying to develop at all? And what are the favourable conditions? If your life is so hard and so difficult, and so painful, chances are you won't evolve, you'll just be crushed. If it's also just so pleasant, chances are you won't evolve. So what is the real factor that makes you evolve; what is the real motivation?

_____ : You're not satisfied with you as you are.

S: That seems to come in various ways; some people seem to have this anyway, however pleasant, however agreeable the circumstances, they at least dimly feel that there's something more, there's something better, beyond, that they ought to be striving for - so they do.

Manjuvajra: This in a way is quite opposite to what some pseudo-Buddhists pick up. I remember when I first came in contact with Buddhism and Eastern religion you were told that the main thing was like acceptance of where you are at the moment. You know, to sort of, just become satisfied.

S: Well, I think there's an ambiguity in the word 'acceptance'. I think one can quite rightly say, 'recognize where you are', because in a way, where you are now is where you start from, and there's no need to be under any illusions as to where you actually are now, otherwise you won't know what step to take next. So recognise where you are now, but if 'acceptance' means accept that, 'oh well, I've been brought here by my karma, karma, as it were, meant me to be a householder, or karma meant me to have this job, and therefore I've just got to accept it and carry on', well that would be quite a distortion of Buddhist teaching, and no doubt that distortion has taken place in some cases - just accept the status quo, as it were.

_____ : We've wrapped up the thing about motive, Bhante. I think for me there's still the distinction between, or at least (unclear) the distinction between motive of somebody who's meditating or enjoying relaxed situations, Deva-like situations with the right motive, and those who are enjoying them for the wrong motives. The situation being.....

S: Well, the motive or the attitude is important because you can enjoy a sort of Deva-like state with the right motive. Supposing you really have been working very hard - you might, you know, human nature being what it is, have worked a bit too hard, you might have overshot the mark. So you might need to relax; go a little bit, mindfully, in the opposite direction. So you say, 'OK, I'll take a week off, I'll go to Cornwall, I'll have a Deva-like life; I won't think about work, I won't think about responsibilities, I'll just enjoy myself, I'll enjoy the sun, enjoy the sea, enjoy a good read, enjoy my meditation, just for a week - but in the interest of my overall development'; and you do it quite objectively in that sort of way - yes? That is quite acceptable. So under those sort of conditions a sort of Deva-like existence for a week or two, even for a month has its place.

Siddhiratna: There seems to be a distinction. It's something like if you had been for the last... I think perhaps what we are talking about is hedonism when we speak of devas, but it's something (Inaudible) really nice, and the other person who (inaudible) tends to see the nature of reality.

S: Yes, quite. Well, there is this distinction between the blissful state and the clear state of Insight, and if you use the bliss as a sort of stepping stone to the Insight, well that's perfectly legitimate, that

is the Path, as it were. But if you are just interested in bliss for the sake of bliss, well that certainly isn't the Path. You'll lose the bliss itself, you know, sooner or later.

Siddhiratna: Which is what happens to Devas.

S: Yes. It's a conditioned state, it can't last.

_____ : Is (Inaudible) an awareness, or not an awareness of the inevitability of that state then ...

S: It certainly includes that. Or one could say that, you know, it's a question of being either in search of a blissful experience, or an understanding of the meaning of things. If you understand the meaning of things, sometimes you don't even bother whether your experience is blissful or not, because in another sense, having understood the meaning of it all is so satisfying, you can put up even with the so-called suffering; it doesn't matter any more, you've understood it, you've seen through it, so never mind - if bliss is there too, that's just an extra - it's a bonus, it doesn't matter very much.

I think that people like hippies who go off to Cornwall, you know, since we are speaking about them apparently, (laughter) people like that, I think, acting the way they do, partly because of the conditions of modern life - because for many people they are so difficult and so demanding, in a way so painful - they just can't cope with it. They're too weak in a way, and this very often is what you find with the hippie-like people; they're very pleasant people, nice people, maybe enjoying some sort of blissful existence in a weak and watery kind of way, but not very strong people, quite weak people; people who haven't been able to cope. In a way a bit child-like. This is like the parent illustrated in the offending poster? - yes? - they look like people who just couldn't cope. (Laughter). Well, they're Deva-like - there they are, you know, floating up in the air - a sort of semi-luminous outline. (Laughter). One can't be too hard on such people, one can't blame them too much, because life in the modern world can be quite tough and one can only feel sympathetic to people who can't cope - who have no choice but to either succumb or to run away - well, better to run away than to succumb - even though it's not a very noble thing to do, you know, at least you do survive. Perhaps you can come into contact with something that will help you to become stronger and then to evolve later on. I gather the valleys of Wales are full of people of this sort, what to speak of Cornwall.

To me they always seem like - those I have met - like half people. Do you know what I mean? As though a whole person has been just split down the middle; they're just half, because they're so weak, and the impact that they make is so feeble. Do you see what I mean? Even two of them together don't seem to make a whole person! (laughter).

But you see on the other hand there mustn't be a puritanical attitude towards pleasure - there's nothing wrong with pleasure, there's nothing wrong with, you know, a blissful state, it's quite alright, and you also need apparently a certain amount of emotional positivity, a certain amount of blissful experience to keep you going, to keep you sort of toned up; you know, the more refined the source you get it from, of course, the better.

So, if you are to evolve, you have to be free from a state in which you are suffering all the time, a state in which you are overpowered by continuous neurotic greed, a state in which you are living on an animal-like level, unable to distinguish between skilful and unskilful, and a state in which you are living in a round of continual pleasures.

Siddhiratna: It's interesting that's there's no reference to the Asura-loka.

S: That's true. I don't know why that should be.

_____ : It is often included in the Deva level.

S: It's often included in the Deva-level. If one does that, well one could say, indulge in a neat piece of scholasticism and say, 'Well, in the case of the Asuras you get your pleasure from fighting'. (Laughter). Some people do, don't they?

Mangala: What are the second Four Freedoms generally known as?

S: These are the 'Four Freedoms from non-human types of birth'. So the first four are the 'Four Freedoms from fetters within human existence', human existence having been attained, and the second four are the 'Four Freedoms from non-human types of birth', and we could also say from the corresponding mental states, of a human being so long as they last, which also suggests that so long as they do last you are not, strictly speaking, a human being. You are either a being in Hell, or a Preta, an animal, or a Deva. But the criterion being that there is no motivation to practise the Dharma. These are states of existence or states of mind in which there is no motivation to practise the Dharma. That is what the fetter consists in.

Manjuvajra: Do you have anything to say about the, sort of, cosmological existence of those types of being?

S: In what way?

Manjuvajra: Well, dealing with them in a psychological way, I'm quite happy with that; I'm becoming more happy with talking about things in the cosmological, but even when I do it's rather tongue in cheek - I don't know that I really believe in Hells or Ghosts or Gods.

S: I think one can't really clear up this without going into objectivity and subjectivity, if you see what I mean. It's as though, if one thinks in terms of a mental state one has necessarily to think in terms of a world - in the sense that where there is subject there is object, where there is object there is subject. Within conditioned existence these two always go along together. So that if you have a human being, a being in a mental state which we describe as a human mental state, then you must have a world of human beings. So, in the same way, if you have someone in a Preta-like mental state, well then there must be a world of Pretas. Yes? Do you see what I mean? So, the possibility of the world depends upon the possibility of being in that particular mental state, and you could also say that the possibility of the being in that mental state depends upon the existence of the corresponding world. So that where you get being you will get world, where you get world you will get being. So I don't really see - I'm generalising on philosophical grounds - how you can have the one without the other. If you can imagine, or believe in, a person who is all the time in a state of neurotic craving, well that's a Preta, well there must be a world of Pretas - and so on. This is how I see it. I don't see any philosophical difficulty at all, any metaphysical difficulty, or inconsistency.

Mangala: (Inaudible) just because one in a state of that why there has to be a world of it?

S: Well, can one really have a subject without an object? Do we experience a mind without a body? If there is a body there must be a world for the body to inhabit. So do we ever experience mind without body - or body without world?

Kamalasila: There's one Preta-like person in his own world, inside the ordinary world, and there isn't ...

S: Ah, but which world is within which?

Kamalasila: Well, his world is within....

S: Why shouldn't we say that our world is within his world. You've got these various interfusing worlds, which are within one another, not in a material spatial sense, but in some other sense that perhaps we haven't got a proper word for. Do you see what I mean? But, you know, one cannot really say that your world is more real than his world; the Buddhist point of view is that these worlds are all equally real, or unreal, i.e. they're all conditioned. Yes?

Manjuvajra: So the Preta's world is the world that the Preta-like person lives in, exists in.

S: Yes. Yes. Yes. Which is just as real as the world that you, being not a Preta, live in. Not that his world is sort of figmental, but yours is the real, solid world; no, not that. His world is as real to him as - in its own terrifying way - as your world is to you in your more relaxed way.

Kamalasila: Yes. You get the feeling from the traditional iconography that there's a place where there are lots of Pretas all together...

S: Well yes. That is true. A Preta sees other people as Pretas, you could say. Because a Preta is interested only in greed.

Mangala: Would it not, perhaps be more appropriate to talk about Preta realms - there are as many Preta realms as there are Pretas, rather than...

S: Well yes, there are realms within realms. Just as within the human world, you know, you've got a world of philatelists, you've got a world of yachtsmen, a world within a world.

Mangala: I mean like with realms of (Inaudible) one realm, which they all sort of go to.

S: I think the mistake lies in not taking pictorial expressions literally. You know, you have them stacked up one above the other, whereas it isn't really like that at all. The 'above' is in terms of value, if they are arranged correctly, but really they are interpenetrating, which is what Buddhist thought actually says. But in any case there is no *nama* without *rupa* and no *rupa* without a world, because *rupa* is already world, because it is three-dimensional, and those three dimensions can be protracted and then you have your world. Whether there is, in the common-sense sense, a world, that is another question, but a world is constructed, even if it's only constructed mentally, as an interpretation of experience. So the Preta interprets his experience in terms of a Preta world just as you interpret your human experience in terms of a human world, and his world is as much there for him as your world is there for you.

You get a good illustration of this in the case of a paranoid person; he really does live in a paranoid world; he lives in a fearful world, a terrifying world. And you're also in his world. It's not simply that he's in your world but you're not in his world - you are in his world as a terrifying object. So, sometimes you do feel, when you are in contact with certain people, that they really are living in a different world; they really are quite literally - they're not living in the same world as you; you don't speak the same language, etc., etc.

_____ : Sometimes they sort of draw you into their world as well, which ...

S: Yes. Oh yes. I had a friend once, a woman, who really did live in a sort of Hell world, and you could feel her trying to draw you into it. And in a way, so long as you were with her, you were living in the Hell world, you were literally visiting Hell. It was really quite odd and quite awful.

Sagaramati: (Inaudible) deva-realm. It's as if they are materially different. (Inaudible) there was an objective different pattern of (inaudible) worlds.

S: but then this raises the question of what is matter. (Laughter) (pause, more laughter and inaudible comments).

Vajradaka: It would be the objective content of the perceptual situation.

S: Yes. Yes. The objective content of the perceptual situation. Or what is construed as such? That is the difference with rupa. But probably it's best to think in terms of experience, and different types of experience which construe the content of that experience in different ways - I think it's more like that. Not thinking in terms of a sort of three or four or five storey universe inhabited by different beings on different levels. That's a quite unsatisfactory way of looking at it. It might be alright for pictorial purposes - well you can't represent it pictorially I think in any other way - but you mustn't really think like that.

Ajita: (Inaudible).

Sagaramati: I usually associate the human world with this body, the fact that you've got a brain, then you're human. The fact that he can see, can think. I always imagine in the other worlds there must be some corresponding, as it were, *kama* body.

S: Well, this is true. This is exactly what the Buddhist texts say, though the question does arise, 'Well what is a body?' It's not so much that there is a thing called a 'body', but you have an experience let us say, and you construe part of that experience as having a body.

Sagaramati: So people with similar experiences have similar bodies.

S: Yes, they construe their experience similarly. And people with slightly different experience will construe that experience differently. People with, say, more refined experience will construe that experience in a more refined way, and in this particular respect have a more refined body.

_____ : In some dhyana states the body sort of vanishes, or gets very, very refined anyway.

S: Yes. Right. Even, so to speak, literally. I was hearing on the radio something about this nervous disease or whatever it is - is it called 'anorexia', not eating - and apparently they have now sort of come to understand that the cause of this is that the person concerned, usually a youngish woman, just doesn't want to grow up, doesn't want to have a mature physical body, usually because of the possibilities of sexual encounter - that gives rise to it - which they don't want, and so starve themselves in order to have the sort of body they want, i.e. you know, an immature body. So you see the mind sort of acting almost directly on the body in this way.

Vajradaka: The same is said to be true of obesity as well.

S: Yes, they mentioned that also. You feel yourself as a big person, so you eat a lot to fill out that image.

Manjuvajra: You do get big blustery people, don't you?

Vajradaka: What I meant was that they related it particularly to the same reason, the same causes as anorexia of not wanting to have sex.

S: Ah! Big, chubby, and baby-like. Not even sort of juvenile, but infant-like. Well, yes, you can meet some big fat people who are just like big babies - right. Anyway, perhaps we've gone into that sufficiently - the Eight Freedoms. Alright. Oh! Perhaps it's tea-time, or coffee-time. Will you go and see what's happening - perhaps there's no-one there to put the kettle on.

Vajradaka: What is that book, Bhante?

S: This is *'The Tibetan Tradition of Mental Development'*, published by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. Can you put the kettle on then?

_____ : Yes - it's not an electric kettle, it's the big one.

S: Oh, oh, ah, OK.

Mangala: Put it on the a gas burner.

Kamalasila: It sounds very like *'The Jewel of Liberation'*.

S: Yes. The lists are mentioned. Someone seems to have taken my copy of *'The Jewel Ornament'*, so I looked it up in this, but I think it's basically the same.

_____ : As the Jewel Ornament.

S: Yes, as far as I recollect, at least the bare list. This contains a bit more of explanation.

_____ : It's a bit enmeshed in the text (unclear)...

Devamitra: Could I ask you what you'd like to drink? [General drink orders follow]

Ajita: Bhante, you mentioned in the *'Survey'* that a Bodhisattva (unclear) development could invoke an (unclear) to the Buddha. Is that right? (unclear)

S: Well, it's the same principle - where there is subject there will be object. If you produce an idea strongly in your mind there will be a tendency for that to take on an embodiment. If you had a thought of anger and you nourish it, well, it will take on embodiment as an angry action, which is something objectively existing, it's an object, it's no longer just a subject. So if you started, for instance, in terms of starting up a new centre, you'll start thinking about where, and then, yes I'd like to start it up in such and such a place and then all the different arrangements you'll start making, and in the end you actually go there and you'll start doing it.

_____ : Yes. Positive thinking.

S: Positive thinking - and negative thinking too.

Ajita: There could be a naturally different clarity which (unclear)

Siddhiratna: It seems to get taken to extremes sometimes. I can remember somebody telling me something very similar, that they needed a refrigerator, so they sat down and thought about the refrigerator very strongly, intensely, and it came - I somehow got the feeling that the person was telling me a semi-spurious kind of story - you know, a kind of wish-fulfilment (unclear), but I think there must be a difference there between something which is.....

S: Yes, it's not just wishing, it's working. But. you know, you don't work for something until, at least in a rudimentary, provisional way, you've got an idea of that thing. I mean, I've told the story how when I was in Calcutta, you know, eleven, or whatever number of years it is now, I got that letter from the Sangha Trust telling me that my services weren't anymore required, I need not bother to

come back. I just thought, 'Well, this means a new Movement' - yes - so that was the idea - yes? - so then when I came back to England I started working. I could see that I had a sort of picture - at least a provisional one - of a new Movement in my mind - but to begin with, the people that were coming along, and even working with me - they didn't have that. You know, it only became apparent as it actually came into existence in a concrete fashion, comparatively recently. So something starts off as an idea, or in the case of a work of art - not that you have got a definite model of it in your mind, in miniature, as it were, but the germ of it is there. Maybe you yourself, in the case of a work of art, you don't have a clear idea of it to begin with but at least you have a sort of feeling - intuition.

Siddhiratna: I think there's something else, isn't there, where somebody imagines that there's a pot and....

S: Yeah, right. If I just sat down in Calcutta, 'Oh I wish there had been...' (Interrupted by laughter). 'I wish there had been a good Buddhist Movement in England', well, probably I'd be still there wishing! (Laughter). Do you see what I mean?

Subhuti: It does actually seem sometimes seem quite important to get aims and objectives quite clear, for the reason that when they are clear then they do actually tend to materialise.

S: Yes, yes. It's also important to talk about them, because if you go on talking about something long enough, presuming you're a healthy sort of person to begin with, sooner or later you're going to start doing it, it's going to happen. And also you need to clarify ideas because ideas, if they're expressed in rational terms, are common; rationality is common, whereas feeling is individual. So if you want to get people working together on some project you have to be quite sure that you all have the same sort of feeling, you want to do the same sort of thing - you can only do that by clarifying ideas; and then you all know that you want the same sort of thing and want to do, or achieve the thing. (Pause).

Sona: What does seem to happen sometimes though, is that if you want to do something and you can feel the necessary ways in which you have to put your energies and you don't really believe anything's going to come of that, but if you do go ahead and follow step by step something sort of out of the blue, emerges. It's almost if you put the energy into doing something you get it done even though the path is not very clear in the beginning. (Pause).

Sagaramati: I think what Ajita was mentioning (inaudible) about people who make lotuses .. (inaudible) had some power in the sense it being materialised.... (unclear)

S: I think that this can be done. I don't know how it's done in detail, but I certainly don't doubt it. I mean, yes in a general way how mind over matter - what is mind and what is matter? It doesn't really, you know, solve anything, explain anything to state it in those terms. But clearly what we call mind and what we call matter are in a sense the same thing - you could say that matter is the grosser, mind the subtler, form - and that there is a sort of technique of, very speedily, transforming the subtler into the grosser.

Sagaramati: Rather like that Russian version of '2001'.

S: Yes - 'Solaris'.

Sagaramati: 'Solaris'.

S: Yes, right, that was quite interesting from that point of view.

Sagaramati: Especially the book (inaudible).

End of tape one tape two

Kulamitra: I think that perhaps on a slightly lower level, being with people that have had a very strong interpretation of what's going on around them, and you're with them, they express that, and you see it in exactly the same way, but then you go away afterwards and you re-assess it and you think, 'well no, it wasn't like that at all and that isn't how I would have perceived it.' It's as though a very strongly held mental image could be transmitted through the outside world.

S: Yes. Well, you get the different interpretations of history and historical characters. You know, the events dealt with are the same presumably, but the interpretation is so different that you get, as it were, a different picture, you know, a different history, a different person, a different historical person. I mean, there are some historical personalities that are notoriously controversial, in that sort of way.

Sagaramati: That was very much in my mind, this gives rise to the idea that although he was a friend, and there are various sort of subjective interpretations of those, and some of them are more coloured by the subject's mind.

S: For instance, even if you take a relatively simple and uncomplicated event or phenomenon like an Order Day - I sometimes get completely contrary reports from different people about Order Days, because where they just give an impression you can expect differences, because that is clearly subjective, but sometimes even when they go into facts of what was actually said, well, the selection is so different; each person seems to make a different selection and put a different emphasis and you end up with two rather different pictures, as though there had in fact been two events, two Order Days! (Laughter). One attended by one person, and one attended by the other!

Sagaramati: What determines which one's most objective? Is it the person who is in the more aware sort of state of mind?

S: Presumably who understood more clearly what was going on. It's partly observation, partly understanding, partly freedom from subjective bias. You know, first of all you need the complete factual records, so far as that is possible, and then you need the interpretation of the facts.

Sagaramati: In Order Day reports, sometimes the factual reporting is.... (unclear)

S: Yes. I gather that they've been one or two slip-ups, even on the last Order Day, or rather the reporting-in from the last Order Day. I think, since we are on the subject of Order Days it is quite important to have a good reporter. Maybe it isn't always possible, but I think it is known that certain people, fortunately or unfortunately for themselves, are good reporters - yes? - Chintamani is very good, isn't he? Anoma's very good. So I think it probably will have to be left to these people - one can't just allow almost anybody to report an Order Day. It's not a question of 'Let old so-and-so have a go' - well no, it is very important that there should be a faithful report, factually accurate, reasonably consistent, and also reasonably well written.

Alright, let's pause there.

(Long pause).

S: Alright, let's go on then to the Ten Endowments. The author says 'If one has attained these eight freedoms one should realise this opportunity to practise the Dharma, to protect one's body like a wish-fulfilling gem'. So, the Ten Endowments; first of all, five personal endowments - (1) Birth as a human being, which gives one the potential to attain Liberation'. This is, I think, pretty obvious.

Mangala: Is this from the text, or from ...?

S: This is from *'The Tibetan Tradition of Mental Development'*. And then '(2) Birth where the Dharma flourishes, or in a central land'. This term 'central land' originally meant Bodh Gaya, but now refers to any place where the Buddhadharma is practised. The *Madhyadesha*, the Middle Land, originally meant Bihar and what is now Uttarpradesh, United Provinces, but as the author says here it means now any area where the Dharma is actually practised.

And thirdly, 'Birth with a body having all five senses intact'. (Pause).

The fourth one is a bit different - 'Birth into a life free from the Five Heinous Crimes', which are: killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an Arhat, purposely shedding the blood of a Buddha, and causing schism in the Sangha.

There's a bit of ambiguity here, because it speaks of 'birth into a life free from ..'. So, in the case of the previous three endowments, it's as though one enters into a situation where from the moment of one's birth you are actually endowed with something in a positive way. As soon as you're born - well you're born as a human being from the very instant of birth. When you're born into a middle or central country, well, from the instant of your birth there you are in the middle country - yes? And in the same way, when you are born into a country where you're born into a body or with a body with all five senses intact, as soon as you are born there you are with your perfect human body. But in the same way, can you be born into a life free from the Five Heinous Crimes? Killing one's father, mother and so on.

Kamalasila: You could be born with an ethical sense.

S: Yes, but it refers to the actual act.

Siddhiratna: Is it talking about past karma at all, because, I mean in the same as the other three, you must be born into life free from the Heinous Crimes. You will be, what, thirty seconds old, and then you'll be a minute older, and until you've reached a state of development when you've got (unclear) how to pick up things and hit somebody with it, your body's going to be free from killing.

S: No, but it says, 'Into a life free from' ... So birth into a life free from.

Subhuti: When you first said that I understood that to mean a situation in which there weren't (unclear) things going on around you, there wasn't the tensions and pressures which might induce you to act....

S: It doesn't actually say that, does it? I don't think it can be taken literally. I think the only way we can take it which will make sense of it is not to take it as, as it were, starting from the moment of birth as in the case of the other three Endowments, but it means that at the moment when one takes up the spiritual life one has not got hanging over one's head, from the earlier part of the present life, the terrible consequences of having done any one of these things, because that would act as such a terrible pull backwards, yes? I think this is the only way in which one can make sense of it.

Siddhiratna: You're saying then that when it says 'born into a life' you're talking about, sort of, having gone for refuge, or taking up the spiritual, all in the spiritual...

S: Yes, yes, in that sense, yes.

Mangala: One has to take it up some time, I mean you can't commit these crimes....

S: Right.

Mangala: I mean, if you have committed these crimes, one or other of these crimes.

S: Well - then you can only do your very best to undo the consequences of whatever you have done. After all, these Eight Freedoms and Ten Endowments represent an ideal situation - they will not always obtain - that is to say, all of them. For instance, the first of the Five Circumstantial Endowments is 'The presence of a Buddha during the time in which one lives', well that's one that one may well have to do without. Yes? So the Eight Freedoms and the Ten Endowments represent the ideal situation which will presumably obtain in very few cases. But even if the situation is less than ideal it doesn't mean that one shouldn't, or that one can't make an effort, surely. So even if you have done even all of these, or committed all of these offences, I won't say 'never mind', well that's certainly a terrible and serious matter, but still you can make progress, even though you have led such an evil life, up to the moment of your, as it were, conversion.

Siddhiratna: Isn't Angulimala a good example?

S: Angulimala is a good example, I mean, he killed so many people, he hadn't committed these actual offences, but he had killed a number of people, but still he did become an Arahant, after a lot of suffering.

Vajradaka: He was about to go and kill his mother.

S: He was about to go and kill his mother, yes.

Devamitra: Is there any actual record of anybody having done any of these things and then gone on to gain Enlightenment?

S: Not that I can remember, no.

Ajita: Milarepa. How about Milarepa?

S: Well Milarepa had killed a number of people, but he hadn't done any of these things. 'Causing a schism in the Sangha', by the way, doesn't mean, in this context, as a member of the Sangha, but for instance, if you were a king, or a powerful person, and had used your influence, you know, to create a schism in the Sangha.

_____ : Does that mean you can cause a schism, if you're a member?

S: Well, if you're technically a member, yes you can, but this whole question of schism needs proper looking at. We haven't ever gone into this - it's technically '*Sanghabheda*'.

_____ : Sanghabheda ?

S: '*Sanghabheda*' - B H E D A - 'division'. We know what schism is in the Western ecclesiastical context - it means setting up a separate church, as it were. I was going to say traditionally in Buddhism, but the word 'traditionally' wouldn't be quite correct, it's more a question of later tradition. Perhaps we can approach it via the writings of S. Dutt. Have you seen those writings? There's a whole series of volumes. He has discussed the question of '*Sanghabheda*' and he has pointed out that at least in the early days it was not such a dreadful thing as it later came to be regarded, and that there was actual positive provision for it in the Vinaya originally. Alright, supposing you have a Sangha. Supposing - of course the context is, or the context of discussion is a Sangha of bhikkhus, so let's keep to that for the time being. Supposing you have a Sangha in that

sense, and supposing, within that Sangha, let's say it consists of, well, twenty people, that's a full Sangha for most purposes, for all purposes, yes. Supposing you've got a Sangha of twenty bhikkhus, and supposing there's a disagreement amongst them, yes? Supposing that that disagreement is not on any point of Vinaya, so it's not that some of them want to observe the Vinaya, or a particular point of Vinaya, and others don't, it's some point of difference other than that, but of such a nature that it is not possible for them to live together as a single community, even though they are all Going for Refuge etc. etc. and even all observing the Vinaya, well what should they then do? They should separate, they should divide; there should be a '*Sanghabheda*', yes? And one body should go and set up a separate *Avasa* as it's called, a separate, so to speak 'parish', yes? And have friendly external relations rather than unfriendly internal relations. So in a way it provided for growth. You know, it's just like a cell, when it gets too big it just divides and you get two living cells. So from this point of view, in this way, Dutt points out, it's a quite, sort of, healthy thing.

We did something like this, well something like this happens when, for instance, you have a branch of a centre in the FWBO and the branch begins to get a bit big, or people in the branch, they don't see quite eye to eye about certain matters of detail, see eye to eye with the people in the actual centre, so they break off and they become an independent centre, an autonomous centre as we say. So they are still Going for Refuge, they still are loyal to the Order as a whole, to the FWBO and everything, but they just want to do things or carry out things in their own way - this is quite acceptable. Yes?

So the kind of '*Sanghabheda*' which is really sort of completely unskilful is if there's a sort of playing of party politics within the Sangha, within the Order, within the Spiritual Community, and setting one sort of group of bhikkhus or whatever, against another, for the sake of one's own personal leadership or supporting one's own personal opinion, and so on.

_____ : Stirring.

S: Stirring up, yes. But if there's a sort of natural division in the sense that certain people are inclined to do things in this way, certain people are inclined to do things in that way, well let them separate positively and harmoniously - that will be in the overall interests of the whole Movement. Do you see what I mean? But in more recent times '*Sanghabheda*' has been an absolute bugbear and the positive aspect of it has been quite forgotten in most Buddhist countries. Yes? Do you see what I mean? Though divisions have, of course, occurred in all Buddhist countries, but even so they usually have been unable to see the positiveness of the division. Yes?

So '*Sanghabheda*' is not necessarily a crime or a sin or whatever you like to call it. It's not necessarily unskilful. It may be the most skilful thing to do in the circumstances.

Siddhiratna: Is there a concrete situation, Bhante like if you've got a centre with a number of people whose interests are a little bit at variance, like some people want to do study, some people want to do meditation, and it's just necessary for them to love meditation, a lot more peace and quiet, i.e. there's not many communities talking about, say, Dharma etc., and the Dharma people not too constrained that they have to keep silent in the study, so it's natural that they should divide. I think you get that in Mitra groups as well, where you've got new people coming in, so that the group has to split, it has to divide to allow those groups some movement.

S: And in a way division means multiplication, the principle of life. It's not necessarily a negative thing - far from it in many cases.

Siddhiratna: So why has it become to be regarded as negative in the later tradition? When does it become a heinous crime?

S: I think

Mangala: I was just going to say there probably are negative ways in which that can come about and positive ways. I think the word 'schism' actually is very strong, it almost implies this kind of...

S: Yes, for instance, because of its history, in the West, 'schism' in the West has always been regarded as a terrible sin because there's one true church to which everybody had to belong, and to break away from that and set up a separate church was a really terrible thing to do. But there isn't anything like that in Buddhism. There's also the question of simply the size, the largeness, the unwieldiness of a single Sangha let us say. I mean, we've experienced this ourselves, that if you've got a very large number of people living together as a community, then at least some people in that Community will not feel that they have sufficient freedom of action, or that their ideas or their views, or their way of doing things sufficiently counts, yes? I mean, the group, to use that term for the moment, has to be sufficiently small for you to count in that as an individual, and to make yourself felt, as it were. Now there could be - suppose there's a Sangha of fifty people - well maybe there's four or five who've got such strength of individuality let's say, they can make themselves felt, even if there's fifty people present, even if there's a hundred, but there may be other people who are just not able to do that. They can make themselves felt if there's only five or ten people present, but not if there's fifty or sixty. Yes? So they would start feeling naturally then a bit suppressed, even if nobody was suppressing them, or disgruntled, even without objective cause. So the best and healthiest thing, the most skilful thing, would be for them or that group itself, to divide, so that everybody is able to feel himself as more a member of that particular group - again to use that term - and able to make himself felt. Yes?

Otherwise you get a situation in which there are a number of, as it were, dominant people, a minority of dominant people and a majority of dominated people, and that isn't a healthy situation from the spiritual point of view. If you've got, say, fifty people, all of whom are able to make themselves felt, even though there are forty-nine other people present, fine, you can have then a Spiritual Community of fifty people, but not otherwise.

Sagaramati: Is there a relationship between, say, making yourself felt and being an Individual - do those necessarily go together?

S: I think so - I'm not thinking in terms of making yourself felt in the sort of personality way, but that you should be able to sort of put yourself across, that you shouldn't be so sort of unobtrusive or so shy that you're virtually ignored, though no-one actually sort of wants to ignore you. Yes? Maybe you aren't yet really fully an Individual, you need to become one a bit more, but then the smaller group is going to help you, the smaller group will encourage you, whereas the large one only will intimidate you very often. I mean, you may speak up with only five or six people present, all of whom you know quite well, but perhaps you wouldn't speak up if there were a hundred people present, most of whom you don't really know very well at all. Some people again formulate their ideas very slowly, they can't speak quickly, they can't get a quick word in, they don't have that sort of knack, they don't function like that, so they tend to get ignored or overlooked and their views, their ideas, their feelings, tend to get ignored or overlooked.

So therefore it's a quite healthy principle, this of sub-division - it's not schism in the Western sense when it takes place for these sort of reasons.

Devamitra: Do you think that sort of principle should be applied to all of those, because a number of people express dissatisfaction with the Order Days because they are unable to (unclear) occasions, when there are so many together.

S: Well this isn't strictly true, because there is reporting-in.

_____ : Yes, but they don't actually do it!

S: Well then that's their fault.

Siddhiratna: I think that on the last Order Day, I was talking to Devaraja and I thought he made a very good point, that Order Days, because of the Chairman being at Order Days, makes too many announcements in the sense (unclear). I think Sona did it, but I mean I understand that he had to do it. What I think was being said by Devaraja, but I didn't agree with him, was that Reporting-in should be Reporting-in and not announcements, which tend to drag the whole thing on much too long and wear people down. It's almost as if information of that nature either ought to be in 'News Letter', in 'Shabda', in 'Mitrata', or posted up on the noticeboard on an Order Day, and that announcements of that nature ought to be kept out of Order Meetings so that people can actually talk about their own experiences. I think that would tone up the Order as a whole.

Devamitra: I must stress that I don't get the impression that there are that many announcements. I mean, I don't make many announcements when I report-in. I usually talk about what I have been doing.

S: Sometimes, for instance, the announcements, I imagine is in case there may be some discussion required.

Siddhiratna: No, because the discussion would be postponed until afterwards, and by doing that often it negates any discussion.

Subhuti: Well in fact it seems to be really difficult to have discussion (unclear) if there's a lot of people it's very, very hard.

S: I think that is the main point, that you can't have discussion.

Subhuti: Yes.

S: You can certainly report-in, and no-one should feel shy of reporting-in, because you are asked, and I believe you still do, to go round, so if people don't get an opportunity of speaking about themselves, well it's just because they don't take it. But the question does arise about discussion, because you can't have a discussion with forty or fifty people, that's quite impossible.

Siddhiratna: In Glasgow it was really very, very good because there was I think twenty-five, twenty to twenty-five people there, and many people just sort of talking about themselves, about their experience and what they felt. I spoke quite a lot, and at the last Order Meeting I passed, in the sense that I didn't want to, sort of drag the thing on, I felt ... like forty, forty-five people at that Order Meeting, I felt it would be wrong for me to start talking about myself and so much time being spent on one....

S: Just on you!

Siddhiratna: Yes, I mean do you think it's alright to do that, to subject the other Order Members to discussion about the way I was feeling? It felt wrong to do that with that amount of people, whereas at Glasgow it felt very good to do that where there was only half that number.

S: This of course raises the question, well raises a number of questions which maybe we can just sort of touch upon since they've come up. What is the function of an Order Meeting? That is one thing, and supposing you do have, say smaller Order Meetings, smaller Order Days I mean, then how are you going to get together periodically, because the meeting of everybody together from time to time

is also important.

Siddhiratna: I think we discussed this a year or two ago with the notion of holding Order Days outside London or in the country.

S: Well, this is being done; we've had Order Days in Norwich, we're going to have the next one in Norwich, and then Order Day in Glasgow, but then again what seems to happen is that a lot of people don't go, so that for them there isn't an Order Day that month. If it's up in Glasgow they think, 'Oh well, you know, it's difficult to go up to Glasgow', so, you know, they don't go to Order Days. Maybe, what possibly has to be considered now is alternative, that is to say two Order Days for different groups of people on the same day.

Siddhiratna: Or, isn't there a difference in emphasis on Order Retreat Day as opposed to Order Reporting-in Day, Order Business Day, where maybe the amount of verbal communication is in fact kept at a minimum, things like that.

S: Order Retreats don't seem to have been all that popular do they, for some reason or other?

_____ : The convention was popular and that was virtually like a retreat.

S: Yes, that's true. I think what a lot of people liked about that was, that it was all run for them, whereas many were of course accustomed to running things, or having to run things. I mean, all the cooking was done, the programme was planned, the whole thing was, sort of, laid on by half a dozen people.

Sona: What I personally find interesting on Order Days is when people report-in about what's happening. Not about them particularly personally. It doesn't seem a particularly appropriate situation to talk about yourself personally, but obviously some people are involved in a situation that someone's already described, for instance at Sukhavati, where Subhuti's already described what's happening at Sukhavati, the rest of the Sukhavatins can't really say very much, maybe just adding one or two words. But it's interesting to find out what is happening at other Centres, and the point about announcements, in fact, although I spoke for some time at the last Order Day, the actual period that I announced anything was very, very short indeed, most of what I said was sort of reporting-in about what had been happening at Padmaloka and in Sweden.

Siddhiratna: I do remember it being very long, and the other thing that Devaraja mentioned, I think that for instance Mahamati spoke about Vajradhatu in a way which wasn't just subjective in the sense he was airing personal problems, it was quite interesting but it wasn't businessy. Somehow he had actually got a balance between talking about the way he felt and what he was doing which wasn't a psychological analysis of his own state and then at the same time wasn't just a business matter; he seems to have reached a balance, and it didn't take too long either, just a couple of minutes, to get it all done, and it was very interesting.

S: I must say that reading through the reports of Order Days the least interesting part, I find, is parts where people are saying how they are feeling or (unclear) Someone says, 'Well, I haven't been feeling too good this month' (laughter), or someone says, 'Oh, I've been going through a lot this month.' Well, this is so vague and subjective, it's hardly worth saying and it's certainly not worth reading about. Or someone says, 'Oh, a lot's been coming up this month.' Well again it doesn't really mean anything. I think we mustn't be sort of self-indulgent in a sort of subjective way. If one needs to communicate one's state of being let us say, I think it needs to be done more in depth and with great sincerity and amongst a small number of people. Otherwise it is almost ridiculous standing up, if you do stand up, on an Order Day, 'I've really been going through it because' you know.

Sona: There is a sort of a feeling you have to say something, that you've been going through it, people seem to be wondering what to say....

S: Well, you know...

Sona: ... when they have nothing to say

S: Well, I think Order Day is, I mean the sort of reporting-in, I presume, is so that people know what one another are doing; I think that is the main thing.

Siddhiratna: Maybe the emphasis should be business then.

S: No, not necessarily business, because, you know, you might have read a book that you wanted to talk about because you think it could be of interest to other Order Members. Or you might have gone to see an interesting film and talk about that. Or you might have had certain, you know, objective problems, maybe, sort of difficulties with the work that you were doing and you decided to tackle them in a certain way and then you got certain results and you just want to talk about that, as a sort of experiment or experience. So that's the sort of thing that people should share with one another when they get together I would imagine.

Siddhiratna: ... with forty to fifty people doing that it can go on for hours.

S: Yes, and reflecting, you know, their reflections on their experiences.

Sona: In fact last Order Day, although it was getting on for fifty people, it went remarkably quicker ... (Inaudible)

Subhuti: I think maybe we should think in terms of having tiers, so that there would be a weekly Order meeting of the Local Chapter; then maybe a monthly meeting of a Regional Chapter where you can find out perhaps about...

S: Yes.

Subhuti: two in England or in England and Scotland, something like that, North of England and Scotland, South of England. And then every three months have a gathering of everybody in England, and then once a year, or once every two years have a Convention of the whole Order.

S: Yes. Right. I don't think, though, the division North and South is going to help very much. We need to divide London itself I think. Yes?

Siddhiratna: Norwich, Manchester and Glasgow and then Brighton, Aryatara and London. I'm not sure how the numbers actually work out, but it seems a good division, a natural division.

_____: Geographically Norwich is a much better place for communications to London than Manchester and Glasgow, With Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh, there still wouldn't be that many people.

Sagaramati: I think London seems to be the best central place, without doubt.

_____: (Inaudible)

S: It would be a question of how many Regional Order Days each month - maybe there should be four.

_____ : Each month?

S: Um. I mean the monthly Order Day. I don't think you could have just two Regional Order Days, one North and one South, because you still get far too many people in London.

_____ : (Inaudible)

S: Yes. You need to divide London itself. If you didn't do that, then you wouldn't solve the problem.

Devamitra: That would raise other difficulties though. It is important for the Chairmen and Mitra Convenors to get together on a very regular basis and...

Siddhiratna: But you had that before.

Devamitra: Well normally we meet on the same week-end as Order week-end for those things. It means, maybe taking another week-end out to get those people together.

_____ : Wouldn't three monthly be alright?

S: Another possibility of course, is to all meet together, say meditate together, but then divide for certain purposes.

Devamitra: I think I personally prefer that sort of thing actually, because..... I mean I do appreciate the contact with people from different areas on the Order gatherings.

_____ : If you have these four you could have each one on of them on a different day, a different weekend of the month, so if you felt like it you could always go to an Order Day of another region.

_____ : In fact you could even attend all four if you wanted too.

Vajradaka: Yes, but you'd have a busy life! (Laughter)

Siddhiratna: The thing about Glasgow also that I felt was quite good was that it was in fact a very good scattering of seeds, as it were, when you got - the amount of people that turned up at Glasgow was a really broad scattering of people over the whole Movement. There were people there that you wouldn't have expected to come, there were people there you would have expected - it was a very nice mixture, a sort of pot-pourri. So therefore, I guess, once a week over a month is quite good in that you would get different combinations of people - if you went to two of those you could be pretty sure of seeing a broad perspective of Order Members.

_____ : Then it also might become too much like just your weekly Order Meeting, you know, Sukhavati. That half of London would virtually be all around Sukhavati and Golgonooza.

_____ : Still too big!

Siddhiratna: I wonder if it's worth, if the next two Order Days here (unclear) in Norwich - if it isn't worth trying to divide it into two (unclear) good cross-section of people.

S: I mean, you wouldn't want, presumably to do that for the reportings-in; otherwise you wouldn't hear about half the people, and that's part of the purpose of coming together, yes?

Siddhiratna: In fact that would mean reporting-in. (unclear)

S: But then you might, I mean, that really doesn't matter; it's when it comes to discussion that you need to divide.

Sona: It was a very good discussion.

Vajradaka: It might be more if we divided.

S: There was more in Glasgow, apparently. Perhaps it should all be discussed for the next couple of Order Days and see what people feel. Anyway, let's go on, shall we?

'Sanghabheda' - lost my place.

Anoma: Could you just say what the crimes, what is it 'heinous' are?

S: Yes. First of all, killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an Arahant, purposely shedding the blood of a Buddha, and causing schism in the Sangha. This is a standard list. I haven't sort of said anything about them in detail because I've done that elsewhere on other occasions. But just very briefly - killing one's father and killing one's mother, and so on are because you could say, 'well why is it worse to kill your father or your mother than anybody else? Why should that be particularly bad?' It's because in the case of the father or the mother there's a natural human affection and attachment and to be able to overcome that to the extent of being able to kill that particular person represents an even greater degree of suppression of your own better side, as it were, than if you had killed some other person with whom you did not have that sort of close tie. You see the reasoning?

Mangala: What if there never was a very close tie to start with?

S: Well they wouldn't be father or mother in that particular, in that sense. It's not just because you've got the same blood, as it were, but it represents a violation of your feeling, a greater violation of your own feeling in the case of killing mother or father.

_____ : That's assuming there was a positive....

S: That would assume that there was, yes; which normally there would have been within the context of Indian society as far as one can see, yes? You could say supposing you had been brought up by foster parents and you killed your foster parents without knowing that they were really foster parents and not your real parents then it would be this offence, it would be this sin, wouldn't it? But it - the heinousness consists in the violation of your own feelings to that extent. And the same with killing an Arahant. You have to.... well that represents, you know, what shall I say, a real violation of any feeling that you might have for the Spiritual - if you could even destroy someone who is obviously so much better than you, or so holy, or so detached or so kind, well you could nevertheless take the life of such a person, who had done absolutely nothing against you. That would indicate an even greater degree of insensitivity, moral obtuseness.

But as I say, I have discussed these at length on some other seminar. I can't tell you which one it is, I am afraid. No doubt somebody knows, or can recollect.

Mangala: Talking about bodies, I'm not quite clear on one point - is the human realm the only realm from which Enlightenment can be gained, or is it the best realm?

S: It's usually said to be the only realm.

Mangala: What about the Realm of the Gods, or something like that? Does that mean that they have to once again enter the Human Realm before they can

S: But on the other hand, there are references in Scriptures to Gods hearing the Buddha's teaching and gaining various stages of Enlightenment.

Mangala: And I seem to remember too hearing things like through good action in this life you go to a happier land whereby achieving Enlightenment is easier than the human state.

S: That's not quite the same thing. There are several things here; one is the case of the '*Non-Returner*' who is re-born.....

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..... you know, in a sense as a God, but as a God with Insight, and develops that Insight as a God, without returning to Earth, and gains Enlightenment without returning to Earth - that's a rather special case. There are many references to Gods who heard the Buddha teaching and develop insight and became at least, so to speak, partially Enlightened as Gods. But one could say, well, that sort of thing takes place only during the lifetime of the Buddha, who has, in any case, the title of 'teacher of Gods and men' - '*Sattha Deva manussanam*'. But you could say that it requires something as powerful as the influence of a Buddha to get through to the Deva Realm, or only the Buddha, someone like the Buddha can operate on that sort of level and be heard by the Devas.

Subhuti: What about the teaching of the Buddha-seeds?

S: Yes, there is a Buddha-seed even in the Deva, but that's very limited, isn't it? But the seed is there in everybody, but it need not, sort of fructify, even though it is there. It depends on what circumstances, and the circumstances of the Deva are unfavourable to fructification.

Mangala: Still talking about seeds, I mean, there's also a lot more seeds for Enlightenment in the Hell Realms, than there are in the Human Realms. Isn't that so?

S: No, no.

Mangala: I thought the Human Realms were all equally divided and in the Hell Realms, there were a lot of.....

S: There are more potentialities, more seeds in the Hell Realms than in the Heaven Realms - I think that's what it was as far as I remember.

Vajradaka: And the animals and the Pretas.

S: Yes. But most of all in the Human Realm.

Devamitra: There's a bad mistake in the latest tape catalogue. They still haven't got it right.

S: They still haven't got it right, no.

Manjuvajra: What is the mistake in the tape catalogue? Can we clear that up?

S: It's the proportion. I can find the original Chinese picture. I think it's partly occurring through reducing the number of seeds - in reducing the number of seeds, the proportions have gone....

Ananda got it wrong at the very beginning in some strange way, yes? And though I pointed it out repeatedly, nothing was ever done about it. But I can find the book, it's in the library, and that will settle it once and for all.

Siddhiratna: So it should end up that the Human Realm as the most potential.

S: Yes. (Pause) Alright, let's go on then.

The fifth of the Ten Endowments - 'Having respect for the Three Baskets of the Dharma, which include the Vinaya, or moral discipline, the Sutras, or discourses, and the Abhidharma, or the wisdom teaching of the Buddha.' So having respect for the Scriptures, having respect for the teaching, yes? This is an endowment. This is one of the Five Personal Endowments.

Sagaramati: Would that imply faith?

S: I think it would imply faith. Though not of a very highly developed kind perhaps.

So these Five Personal Endowments say that, first of all one is born as a human being, then you are born where the Dharma flourishes, where you have access to the Buddha's teaching. You've no impediment in any of your senses, your senses are intact, and at the time when you start taking serious interest in the Dharma, you are not suffering from the consequences of any very serious unskilful action, you know, within the preceding part of your life, and also have respect for the Buddha's teaching. This seems quite simple and straightforward really.

Mangala: A bit like Auspicious Signs.

S: Respect for the Buddha's teaching, yes, as embodied in the Scriptures, the *Tripitaka*. So one could say that the, you know, that one finds these Ten Endowments in the - what shall I say? - the good Mitra, as it were, yes? These Ten Endowments, you could say, describe the good Mitra. First of all he is a human being. Two, he's being born where the Dharma flourishes. Well maybe we shouldn't say flourishes, but he certainly has the possibility of access to the Dharma, yes? And then, his five senses are intact - he can see, hear, smell, taste, all the rest of it. And his mind also. It mentions five senses - perhaps six really should be mentioned - he's mentally competent, eh? And when he comes into contact with the Friends and becomes a Mitra, he has no karmic debts, no heavy karmic debts hanging over his head, he hasn't done anything prior to his coming into contact with the Friends and becoming a Mitra, which is going to seriously cripple him morally in his efforts; he hasn't got anything on his conscience; this is what it really means. And he has a respect for the teaching.

So these five would seem to describe the ideal Mitra, one could say, yes? He's human, he's in contact with the Dharma, he's got all his senses complete, nothing on his conscience, and he has respect for the teaching. So he's well qualified to be a Mitra.

Alright then, 'B. The Five Circumstantial Endowments. The presence of a Buddha during the time in which one lives. The rarity of this occurrence through the ages is very great, like a flash of lightning on a dark night.'

But one can console oneself here, can't one, in what way?

_____ : You've got the sort of, impact.....

S: Well, yes, at least you are born within an age in which a Buddha lives. And also perhaps you can console yourself by thinking, 'well maybe you don't need a Buddha yet, at this stage, anyway.' Maybe all you need is a really good friend.

And then - 'The presence of the Dharma.' That's the second circumstantial endowment. The presence of the Dharma - that the Dharma is known, at least conceptually known, that it's extant, at least in the form of tradition.

And then '3. The flourishing of the practise of the Dharma.' Where the Dharma is present in the form of books and all of tradition, in the form of institutions, well that is certainly a circumstantial endowment, but it's an even greater endowment, an even greater circumstantial endowment if the Dharma is actually embodied in people's practice, and that if you can have contact with such people.

And then '4. The existence of the monastic order, the fellowship of those who follow the Dharma and guide others towards the attainment of Enlightenment.' So here the whole Spiritual Community is intended. This is an even greater circumstantial endowment.

And then, fifthly, 'Being under the care of a compassionate person, a patron or a teacher, who looks after one in one's practice.' Clearly this means the Kalyana Mitra. Um? (Pause). So here again you could say that the ideal Mitra is still being referred to. Yes? At least he's born in an age when the Buddha has lived, the Dharma is around in book form, there are people actually practising it, in fact there's a whole Spiritual Community, and he has his own Kalyana Mitra. Yes? (Pause).

_____ : In a way that's what he has to bring to the situation and what the situation can bring to him, isn't it.

S: Yes, right, yes, yes. There's personal endowments and there's circumstantial endowments.

Mangala: This reminds me very much of the 'Auspicious Signs' in the 'Mangala Sutta'.

S: Yes. Right.

Mangala: What to look for ..

S: Um. Yes.

Mangala: .. the Spiritual quest.

S: Yes. So here clearly there's quite good, or quite suitable Mitra study material. Simply going through these Eight Freedoms and Ten Endowments. (Pause) The Ten Endowments being, of course, more positive.
(Pause)

It's interesting - the sequence of these five circumstantial endowments. First of all there's the presence of the Buddha, even if not in one's own lifetime, but certainly in the present historical period. Yes? And then, as the result of the Buddha's presence in the world in the past, there is the Dharma. The Dharma, at least in the form of a system of ideas, at least in the form of the Scriptures. But then, not only that - the teaching embodied in those scriptures is actually being practised by some people. So it's a living thing. Not only that, but there's a whole circle of people in contact with one another, practising and helping one another to practise - there's a Spiritual Community, a Sangha. But not only that - with one of the members of that Sangha you have a specially close and helpful relationship, you have a Kalyana Mitra. (Pause).

Alright then, those are the Eight Freedoms and Ten Endowments which means that we have been going more deeply into the meaning of, or at least in greater detail into the meaning, of this very first of the Ten Causes of Regret - huh? 'Having obtained the difficult to attain, free and endowed, human

body, it would be a cause of regret to fritter life away.' So you can see how great a cause for regret it would be, yes? Supposing you are free from the fetter of holding wrong views, free from the fetter of being born in a totally barbaric land, free from the fetter of being born in a land where no Buddhist Dharma was taught, and free from birth as a demented or mute person, and not only that - free from birth in hell, or in the Preta Realm, or as an animal, or as a long-life Deva; and besides those Ten Freedoms you were in enjoyment of Ten Endowments, that is to say, born as a human being; born where the Dharma flourishes; born with all five senses intact; with nothing on your conscience; respecting the teaching; and then born in an age when the Buddha had lived; born when the Dharma was still extant; born when the practise of the Dharma was still flourishing; when there was a whole Spiritual Community existing; when you had your own Kalyana Mitra and you still didn't make an effort! (Laughter) What a waste! What a cause for regret! Eh? Eh? If you were to fritter your life away, nonetheless, having come so far, what a cause of regret it would be. Yes?

So that certainly does give it more weight. If you've got as far as that, yes? And still you don't make good use of your opportunity, you still fritter your life away - how ridiculous! How pitiable! And what a great cause of regret.

Manjuvajra: Is this a regret.... who regrets it? Oneself or one's spiritual friends?

S: Well it's a cause of regret, you yourself should regret, if you become aware that, you know, this is what is happening. But certainly your spiritual friends would regret it. You've gone all that way and you can't take those few steps further, which are going to, you know, be a source of happiness and well-

being for you. Which are going to contribute so much to your own further development. You've got everything, as it were, eh? And you just go and throw it all away.

And then the next verse goes a bit further - 'Having obtained this pure and difficult-to-obtain, free, and endowed human body, it would be a cause of regret to die an irreligious and worldly man.' That, you know, that's taking it further in the sense of taking it right up to the end of your life. Supposing you went on frittering your life away, you never realised what you were doing, you never corrected yourself, you went on frittering your life away right to the end, and you died, therefore, an irreligious and worldly man, despite having all those wonderful opportunities, then what a cause for regret that would be. Yes? An even greater cause of regret. (Long pause).

Why do you think people do this? Take the case of somebody who is, say, a Mitra, who's got as far as that, who's aware that the Buddha lived, that the Buddha taught, that there is a Dharma, that the practise of the Dharma still flourishes, and is actually in contact with a Spiritual Community, and maybe he has a spiritual friend of his own, maybe he's been coming along to classes for a few months, even a year or two, yes? But then he or she, they just drift away - as far as we can see they're just frittering their life away. Why is this, do you think?

Ajita: I think it's something to do with the fact that they're often unhappy, they get in contact with the Friends, and achieve a certain amount of togetherness and happiness, you know, and from that they experience the world as being kind of pleasurable, don't feel so fearful and gradually the options become quite attractive to them...

S: Yes, right.

Ajita: ... (Inaudible) by getting married or something.

S: I think you're right in the case of some people - that in a sense they haven't really had a spiritual aspiration, yes? That their contact with the Friends has helped them to become psychologically more healthy and positive, which is good as far as it goes, but then unfortunately that starts being an end in

itself. They start wanting a Deva-like existence.

Vajradaka: A number of people in Sukhavati have actually said that quite recently.

S: Um. Yes. So how do you think that can be, as it were, guarded against. Yes, help people to become positive by all means, help them to enjoy life more, but how to, sort of help them to go further than that. Or encourage them to go further than that, inspire them to go further than that. Is it that they don't really possess the capacity in this life, would one say?

Devamitra: You've just got to try and get them in touch with some kind of inspiration - that really is all you can do.

S: Yes.

Mangala: I think you've got to be very careful about not pushing people, making it seem like it's a big drive, it's really pushing a huge boulder up a hill and it will be much easier to sit at the bottom of it. Try and make it seem..... try and sort of lead them on, that it's more enjoyable, it's more pleasurable even in a sense...

S: Yes, yes, right.

Mangala: ... and make it more attractive.

S: Just like the Buddha with Nanda.

Devamitra: I don't think that actually we do make it... I haven't been aware that people have come across that sort of attitude.

Mangala: Well I think we do actually, maybe not sort of consciously, but I think that attitude comes across. I think it does seem, you know, if you're and Order members you're committed, you're expected to really work your arse off on something and all this, and you've really got in and there's no way out, and you've really got to stick with it, and if people...

S: I think it has come across like that to some people - some of them have written and told me so, explaining why they've left the Friends and joined other groups. This is what they've actually said, at least three people during the last few months; they've said this very thing.

Siddhiratna: They think the demands are too much for them?

S: Yes.

Devamitra: Where were they involved with the Friends?

S: Well, two of them had not a very close connection at all. They were people in Cornwall. But this is the impression that they got about the Friends - that it just demanded so much.

_____: Yes, but they couldn't have been in very much contact.

S: But this - yes - but this is, as Mangala was saying, this is the impression that somehow has got across, even though nobody intends that. But that is the impression that has got across. I think there might have been four people in fact altogether, because there was one from Brighton too. Yes? But they - some people had this impression about us.

Ajita: I think, in a way, you've got to entice them and let them see there's something more beautiful further on. What they're experiencing now is quite good and happy but in a sense it's impermanent and there's something better beyond that.

S: I think it's a very difficult and very tricky business, I mean, if anybody in any Centre gives an impression like that, as the result of which, you know, people are scared away, I don't think we can blame them, because it's so difficult to find that point of balance, you know, not to compromise your principle or your ideal, but on the other hand not to discourage people, it's so difficult.

Sona: I think one of the things that might be a contributory factor to this is if Order Members sort of moan, as it were, to Mitras, you know and say how difficult they're finding things.

S: Yes. Ah.

Sona: Instead of, sort of confessing their feelings to other Order Members....

S: Right. Yes.

Sona: ... they sort of discuss it with Mitras and they get a bit scared and then it's all over the place.

Siddhiratna: Can you say what their impressions were in the letters, Bhante, some of them?

S: Now let me just think - Well that the Friends demanded everything; you just had to give everything, you had to totally commit yourself, and if you weren't prepared to do that, almost immediately, then you were more or less wasting your time with the Friends and they would more or less consider they were wasting their time with you if you weren't prepared to do that. That total commitment was wanted and the Friends weren't interested in people who were not in a position to commit themselves totally; they might just as well go elsewhere, so elsewhere they went, or elsewhere they were going - usually to Chime's group. They were looking for something, you know, easy and comfortable and a bit homey, a bit family-like, and where they didn't, well where very little was expected of them - where they felt warm and comfortable and happy. They seemed to want something very homely, that was the impression I got.

So it's clear we can't offer that, but we must not give people who want that the impression that we are not even interested in being in contact with them, if that is what they want. Yes? We should be open to keeping up contact with them and not sort of scare them away. But I realise it's quite difficult; almost inevitably one will lose a few people in that sort of way.

Ajita: Quite often people have got worldly habits and if you expect them to give them up too fast they feel they're going to miss out on some sort of experience they've never had, you know, and just want a little time just to go to a few discothèques, you know.....

S: You also have to take the risk of losing people in that way - that they don't come back from the discothèques! (Laughter) That's where the difficulty comes in, you know, you sort of give them a bit of rope so that they don't react and run away, but on the other hand you might give them just a tiny bit more rope than, well 'need' is a difficult word to use, but than was required by the situation, so you just lose them, as far as one can see, at least for the time being - and then you feel quite bad about that - 'well if I'd only been a bit firmer, if I'd only been just a tiny bit stricter then that person might still be with us.' Yes. So that's why it's such a fine and delicate matter.

Ajita: (Inaudible)

S: Um?

Ajita: Just be aware and keep an eye on them, like. (Laughter)

Anoma: There also seems to be... another reason for Mitras or people going off seems to be that mostly their initial thing comes from reason rather than their emotions and as they get more involved their emotions come into play, and they realise what they've let themselves in for and whereas the ideals were here, and they're quivering somewhere far behind, and it just and it just seems too big a gap. That seems to have happened. *[Pause]*

S: And, you know, distance always lends enchantment to the view. You might have all sorts of rosy ideas about communities, but then you join a community you might find, well, you've still got yourself there, with all your problems perhaps, and they don't automatically go away just because you've joined a community.

Siddhiratna: I think it's probably also expecting too much from other people as well.

S: Yes, right.

Siddhiratna: The community isn't ideal, it's a growing situation and there are bound to be conflicts.

S: Yes. Um. And also there is the general pull of the whole society in which we live, forcibly pulling people away. It may be just, as it were, purely accidental that they drift away. Yes? Just something happens, eh? It might be that purely by accident they met an old friend of theirs who said 'come on, let's go and have a drink' or 'come on, let's go to the discothèque' or whatever people do say to one another in this sort of way, (laughter) and, you know, it's just sheer chance that they happen to meet that person, you know? So they didn't come to the class, and then maybe they didn't come next week, then they felt a bit ashamed about not coming for two weeks running so they didn't come at all after that. It was just accident to start with, if one can speak of accident at all, but sometimes that's the way things happen. Or they suddenly have to go to a different part of the country - maybe if they're working they're transferred to a different branch of the firm or something like that.

Anoma: It seems to be quite difficult if somebody's sort of jumped right in or got into a Community and been quite involved and then they realise almost that they've done it all too quickly. There doesn't seem to be anywhere to recommend them to go because in a way just going to weekly classes isn't any good. It's difficult to advise somebody what to do at that time.

S: Yes. It's like getting married. Supposing after two weeks you realise you've made a mistake you can't just go back to being engaged! (laughter) Yes?

Siddhiratna: Perhaps it comes down to there isn't much diversity yet, to accommodate the many shades of opinion and needs....

S: Not only shades of opinion, but levels of development. (*Sounds of agreement*) I think we're able to accommodate more than we were before, maybe at both ends of the spectrum. But I think there's quite a few people still feel a bit uneasy. Sort of suspecting they're not doing as much as they should be doing, and feeling a bit bad about it.

Ajita: I think that comes in when people don't look at each other as Friend or not. They're caught up too much in what needs to be done and they see the Friends in these sort of terms of what you've got to do. If you just say well sort of develop a true friendship and from that arises the work, you know, or the kind of....

S: I think also in the case of Mitras and others who are coming along it's very important to develop

personal friendship - that they don't get the impression that you're only friendly with them because they're a member of your class, and that if they stopped coming you just wouldn't want anything more to do with them. Yes? Um? Because if you succeed in keeping up a friendship, well, even if they stop coming to the classes, well you're still free to go and see them or go out with them or have a meal with them, and you're still in touch. Yes? And that is the most important factor. Not that if they stop coming to classes, well they're a bad boy or bad girl as the case may be and, you know, you don't want anything more to do with them because they're so naughty, so you punish them by cutting off contact. You don't want to create that sort of impression.

Anoma: I think Judy and Vera's quite a good example of somebody who has sort of kept in contact and has got friends, Order members as friends, and it seems to me it's quite positive that she's having this Buddhist blessing for her marriage. I don't think she sees it as a great sort of spiritual union or anything, it's just that she does have a strong feeling for the Dharma, and it just seems a sort of good link and that she hasn't felt that she's had to sort of cut her connection because she's not completely involved.

S: That's true. Though she did mention in a letter that she'd be just as happy having a Quaker blessing - she mentioned two or three other organisations if (Laughter) we couldn't give it. In her original letter she did say that. She'd rather have it from us than from, you know, any other group, but still if she couldn't get it from us she'd be quite happy to have it from elsewhere. (Laughter) I don't think she was trying to put pressure, I think she genuinely felt that. But - a holy something or other. (Laughter) But, nonetheless it's good that she's still in touch, you know, notwithstanding. If contact is kept up, well anything is...

Sagaramati: Ratnajyoti mentioned just before he left, he said that's the way he saw me. He said that if somebody's not interested in their own development, he said I didn't want anything to do with them.

S: Say that again.

Sagaramati: He said that seeing me - he was talking about me - he said that if I'm with people, and some of those people are not interested in their development, then I just wouldn't have anything to do with them. I think he was saying that about him, as it were, you know, because we used to be friends, but when he sort of went downhill a bit.....

S: Who said this?

Sagaramati: Ratnajyoti.

S: Ratnajyoti - ah, yes.

Sagaramati: I mean that might have been that that did harm him but apparently there's very, very little we can do about it. I mean, it's almost like the friendship on a mundane level.....

S: Well, you've got to be, to begin with, to be able to see enough in the other person to want to be friends with them anyway. Yes? Do you see what I mean?

Devamitra: I've felt experience say, with some people, that the only reason why I have a friendship with them at all is because they seem to be making some effort to grow, and if they stop, then I've got absolutely nothing in common with them - there's no basis for friendship - but with other people I know that if they stop making an effort to grow, they spark me off in some other kind of way and still remain friends - it's a sort of question of temperament, isn't it really?

S: Also, someone can have, you know, a definite potential for growth which may be in abeyance for the time being and you keep in contact with them and are still friends with them, for the sake of that potential at least.

Sagaramati: But it's the area of contact. I mean I find it difficult if he just gets stoned and (unclear) rock and roll, and that's almost all he did, and I just couldn't go along with it. It was almost like there was very very little in the way of contact because he had changed. I felt he had sort of gone back and I just wasn't going to go back in that area.

S: It's as though there has to be a sort of neutral area, like say having a meal together or something like that, you know, which provides a possibility of getting together. We may agree he doesn't want to go forward, but without your having to go back.

Sagaramati: I think that's what it is, sort of interest and stuff like that.

Siddhiratna: Go to a football match in (inaudible place name)

Sagaramati: He didn't like football.

_____ : It's you that likes it!

Sagaramati: I probably would!

S: Some Order members might consider that as backsliding. (Laughter)

Ajita: I think it's when the Order members got too puritanical in a sense. Somebody's got a big point to make actually. They may have said to him maybe (Inaudible) he's a lovely boy and he's really (inaudible). That's why a few of these lads have, you know, kicked back. It becomes like a hound dog, hounding (unclear)..

S: But again, it's a very fine point, you know, to keep up the sympathy and contact, and warmth and feeling for someone, you know, without making them feel bad or guilty, and without your sort of backsliding with them - it's not easy at all. Maybe you could stretch a point, maybe you could go to just one rock concert with him, just to keep up contact, yeh? Maybe you did, but it would be unreasonable to expect you to go every week. Because there's got to be a bit of mutuality in friendship, you know, even if the person doesn't come to classes any more, say in the case of a Mitra, well, he's got to sort of meet you on, sort of, mutual ground and not insist that you just go along with him and do all the things that he wants to do. He should respect the fact that you are not interested in those things, and if he wants to keep up the friendship well just meet on some mutual ground which you can both enjoy.

Vajradaka: Something that I've discovered with one Mitra recently was that they had been kind of withdrawing communication from all the Order Members in their contact because they had kind of labelled the whole Order as being such and such because of an experience that they had had with one or two Order Members, so that they lay everything onto the whole Order and thereby sort of cut off any real meaningful communication, and by talking to them about it we are just sort of seeing the individual Order members as such, and getting back into communication. It seemed to - I know it's rather a rare case - but it seemed to bring something alive again. I think that does happen - perhaps not quite so...

Manjuvajra: I don't think that's rare actually. I should have thought that was a fairly common occurrence, you know, where somebody gets a bad experience with a particular Order Member and then labels the whole Order with the flavour of that experience. It always starts with 'You all', like the

Order's a big lump.

S: Well you see, even Order Members do that, even Order Members do that - just generalise about the Order in a way that doesn't take into account the fact that all the Order Members are different, and sometimes very, very different from one another. So even an Order Member, I mean, within my knowledge sometimes says 'All the Order this' or 'the Order that' when really they should be saying 'Upasaka so-and-so in Glasgow and Upasaka so-and-so at Golgonooza do such-and-such' but they say 'Well the Order does such-and-such.' But they are just referring to two or three people, really. So one must really watch that, otherwise you're just leaving out of consideration the vast mass of Order Members, you're just completely oblivious to them, to their existence. I distrust all generalisations about the Order - and Order Members ought to know better than to make them, except with extreme caution and after really knowing all Order members. There's probably still only myself who knows all Order Members - nobody else as far as I know. Very, very few people have been in contact with all Order Members, or all Centres even.

So therefore one must be very careful what one says about the Order or, you know, about the state of the Order, about the Centres or the Movement, or even any individual Centre, or any individual Community. One might just go on a brief visit to a Centre and a brief visit to a Community, and just be passing through, and then you make some wild generalisation about it afterwards, just on the basis of a few hours' experience, or about a particular group of Order Members you've happened to have met, and that's quite unjust. Situations are changing all the time, everywhere. You might go along to a particular Centre one day of the week and have one kind of experience, go another day of the same week and have a totally different experience. So I think very often we don't do justice, or don't allow ourselves to do justice to the richness and complexity of what goes on within the whole Movement. We want to generalise about it and have it all cut and dried, much too quickly and easily. Yes. Um? You can get out of touch, out of date in your information so easily, even when your original information was correct. The situation can change while you're speaking. I know, say, in the case of Sukhavati, that's probably the most famous example, it's fluctuated hasn't it? Over the last three years, in all sorts of ways, both positive and negative, maybe neither positive nor negative. But it's very difficult to say 'Well it's this, or it's that.' As though it's an absolute statement, you know, held good for all time.

I must confess I get a little impatient when I get - especially letters from people in remote corners of the Movement - generalising about the Movement. This seems really odd sometimes. (*Long pause*)

One must be very careful when one is expressing one's own views or, you know, repeating the views of a certain number of Order Members or a certain section of Order Members, or genuinely stating what is a sort of real consensus of opinion or feeling among the Order actually as a whole. It's very easy to be guilty of misrepresentation.

Anyway, there's probably a consensus of opinion that we should now stop for lunch!

I hope there's a consensus of opinion in the kitchen that it's ready!

end of tape two tape three

S: Alright - Precept 3 - 'This human life in the Kali-Yuga (or Age of Darkness) being so brief and uncertain, it would be a cause of regret to spend it in worldly aims and pursuits.'

What is this *Kali-Yuga*? By the way, it's wrongly spelt here - it should be K - A - L - I. K - A - L - I not E. So what is the *Kali-Yuga* - have you any idea about that?

Mangala: An age in which only one Buddha appears.

S: No.

Siddhiratna: Isn't it a Hindu thing, Bhante?

S: It is a Hindu thing, yes. The Hindus divide world history, so to speak, into four ages, of which the fourth and longest and worst, in terms of ethical and spiritual behaviour, is the *Kali-Yuga* or Age of Darkness. I don't remember the exact date when it starts, but according to the Hindu reckoning it started well before the time of the Buddha - I think roughly about 2000 BC and, of course, we're well into it now - this is the sort of popular Hindu view. You start off with the *Satya-Yuga*, the Age of Truth. There is a popular Hindu saying - it might even be in the *'Mahabharata'* that 'Dharma is like a cow' - with four legs. In the Age of Truth, the First Age, the cow of Dharma stands upon four legs. Then in the Second Age upon three, in the Third Age upon two, in the present Age, the Age of Darkness, only upon one, which, you know, suggests the progressive weakening of the forces of righteousness, as it were. But it is a Hindu idea - you don't really find it in Buddhist literature. But you find in Buddhist literature another conception, which is to say, of the 'Three Ages of the Dharma.' This is an especially important conception in Japanese Buddhism - I've looked up some references to this in Elliot's *'Japanese Buddhism'* and this is what he says. Yes. 'Various Mahayana Sutras reckon the three periods of the Law' that is to say, the Dharma, 'differently. One of the commonest estimates being 500 years for the first period, 1000 for the second, and 10,000 for the third. Nichiren' - that is to say the founder of the Nichiren School - 'seems to have divided the history of Buddhism into three millenniums' - that is, three periods of 1000 years, 'though it is not claimed what will happen when the third will finish. The first period consists of the first 1000 years following the Buddha's death, which after the Chinese fashion is dated 947 BC' - that is, the Buddha's death is dated - 'For historical purposes it covers the Hinayana period and is called in Japanese *'Shobo'* or 'The True Law'. The second is the period of *'Zobo'* or 'Image Law' beginning about the time of the Christian Era and corresponding historically to the beginning of the Mahayana. The third period is called *'Mapo'* or 'Destruction of the Law' and began, according to Nichiren, about 1050. In this dark age there is trouble in both the political and religious world, but also hope.'

So you see the idea here - the idea that after the Buddha's death - for 500 years if you follow the historical reckoning, or 1000 if you follow the Chinese, the Dharma exists in its purity, the genuine Dharma, but after that there is a period, an equally long, - well, according to one reckoning an equally long period, according to the other reckoning a doubly long period - of the imitation or counterfeit Law, image in the sense of counterfeit. The externals of the Dharma are present, but the real truth of the Dharma is not there, the appearances of the Dharma, the teaching, is there, the institutions are there, but the inner realisation isn't there, at least not to the extent that it was before, so this is called the 'period of the counterfeit Dharma.' And then there is the period of the destruction of the Dharma, when even the appearance of the Dharma begins to pass away.

So this whole conception is very important for the later Japanese Schools, like the Nichiren, and the Pure Land School of Shinran, the true Pure Land School, because, following the Chinese reckoning and calculating, they discovered that the beginning of the third period, the 'Age of the Destruction of the Dharma' began in their very own day - that they were living at the time of the beginning of the period of the destruction of the Dharma - therefore they felt a very strong need for a sort of re-statement of the fundamentals of the Dharma, an attempt to revive the Dharma and make it live again, and this was a factor in the founding of those schools of Japanese Buddhism at about that time. For instance, in Japanese Buddhism you can say there is a period, first of all, of plain and simple introduction from China; then the Japanese produced their own versions of those Chinese introductions; but then, in this last period, which I'm dealing with here, Nichiren and Shinran, there's something purely Japanese emerging, and one of the factors in that emergence, is this sense of urgency produced by their belief that they were just about, were just entering upon, the third period,

that of the destruction of the Dharma, so that they had to do something quite serious, quite drastic. You get the idea? So there are these two, sort of, conceptions which mustn't really be confused. There is the Hindu conception, which is in the background of Buddhism to some extent - like many other Hindu conceptions - of these four periods of, as it were, world history, culminating in, if one can use that expression, the 'Age of Darkness', and then this specifically Buddhist conception of the three periods of the Dharma, that is to say the 'Period of the True Dharma', the 'Period of the Counterfeit Dharma' and the 'Period of the Destruction of the Dharma'.

So whether on account of the first or whether on account of the second, as Dr. Conze has pointed out, about 1000 - or even earlier - maybe even 500 or 600 AD in Buddhism in India, perhaps affected by the actual decline, historically speaking, of Buddhism in India, a sort of mood emerged of everything running down, that we're living in a dark age, an age of darkness, the Dharma is on the decline - yes? And this seems to be reflected here - yes? You get the idea? Yes? Um? I mean, strictly speaking, a Buddhist text shouldn't be referring to the '*Kali-Yuga*' or the 'Age of Darkness'. I mean if you follow the Hindu account strictly, the whole of Buddhism including the life of Buddha, comes in that Age of Darkness, so there's a clash between the two, and how could the period of the Buddha's life and teaching be included in the Age of Darkness, which it is according to the Hindu Tradition.

So, I mention this at some length, in connection with this verse, because it introduces this idea of a whole Age, - yeh? Um? - the Age of Darkness, and thereby, you know, in contradistinction, the New Age, or as people say nowadays 'The Aquarian Age'. Um? So I think we ought to go a little bit into this conception and the validity of that conception. This is why I have given all this sort of background information. You see what I mean? The verse says 'This human life in the *Kali-Yuga* (or Age of Darkness) being so brief and uncertain, it would be a cause of regret to spend it in worldly aims and pursuits.' Of course human life is brief and uncertain in any age, though of course according to Hindu, and one might say Buddhist belief too, in the Age of Darkness human life is even shorter than usual. The Pali texts, as far as I remember - they don't speak in terms of the four Hindu Yugas, not the actual Suttas - but there is in the Pali texts the idea, quite definitely, that human life has got shorter and shorter. It used to be, well several thousand years, but now it's only a hundred years at the most. So you've got less time, and therefore of course you should all the more vigorously practise the Dharma. So what the author seems to mean here is that human life is short anyway, even a life of 10 or 20,000 years is short, but in the *Kali-Yuga* it's a mere 100 years, so you're living in the *Kali-Yuga* how much more effort therefore you ought to put into your spiritual life, how much more effort you ought to put into following the Dharma, because you've got even less time in this Age than you have in ordinary ages. But this is of course convincing only against the general mythological background, but leaving that aside, life is short, whether it's the Dark Age or any other age, even if you had 1000 years, even 10,000 years, it wouldn't be too much for following the Dharma because there's so much to be done. But anyway you have, well not even 100 years, maybe 30, 40, 50 years, so it's salutary to remind oneself of that fact. So if we take it as a general reminder about the brevity of human life and there's an attempt to inspire in us a sense of urgency, that's alright. But it shouldn't be made to depend too much, I think, on this idea of Ages.

But anyway, let's look a little more closely into this idea of the 'Age', especially the 'New Age' or 'Aquarian Age' because it's very, you know, common nowadays. What do people understand about this? What does it convey to you, because you had it in connection with the 'Festival of Mind and Body'. We're all supposed to be 'New Age' Movements etc. etc. So what does all this mean?

Sagaramati: A new dawning of some Spiritual Consciousness.

S: Yes. But how or why is that?

Kamalasila: Isn't it based on Astrology?

S: Yes, yes. Can you be more specific?

Mangala: I think we're supposed to be coming out of the Piscean Age, is it?

S: Yes, yes.

Mangala: and moving into the Aquarian Age, astrologically speaking.

S: Yes, yeh. What is the length of the cycle?

_____ : 2000 years.

S: It's 2000 years for each Zodiacal Sign, yes? So at the time of the birth of Christ it's supposed to mark the inauguration of the 'Piscean Age'. I can't give you the astronomical or astrological data, but anyway the upshot of it is that the sign of Aquarius now begins to be dominant in whatever way it may be and that means that there's a sort of 'New Age' and a New Consciousness dawning. But what are the implications of this?

Subhuti: That consciousness is determined by planetary influences.

S: Exactly. I mean, collectively. Yes? This is what it really means that it's almost an automatic process. So what would be the Buddhist view of that?

_____ : Horrifying.

S: Yes, Horrified, yes?

Devamitra: It takes all the emphasis away from individual effort and growth.

S: Yes, yeh. It suggests that the growth of a new consciousness is a sort of automatic collective business, it's inevitable.

Manjuvajra: There is another way that one could look at it, and that is that the - if one accepted planetary intervention in consciousness - you could say that the planets give a suitable, a good environment

S: So the point is, is that decisive?

Manjuvajra: Oh no, but then the individual has to work

S: But do you think - is that point sufficiently emphasised, even when it is actually made? What is the general impression that one gets, or that is given to ordinary people? What is the general impression?

Voices: It's inevitable.

S: It's inevitable. Yeh. So what would be the word to describe this, the sort of, as it were, scientific term?

_____ : Fatalist?

S: It's fatalistic, but more specifically? But even more specifically than that.

Sagaramati: Predetermined.

S: Predetermined. Well even more technically if you like. There is a term, used by Poppa. It's 'historicism' isn't it? Yes, it's historicism. Yeh? Um?

_____ : As in Marxism.

S: As in Marxism. Well, what is historicism?

Subhuti: The belief that history has an inevitable conclusion.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: That you don't have to wait for the class struggle or whatever.

S: That it is inevitable. Yeh? You'll be, sort of, carried along by it. Um? So it is really a form of historicism, isn't it, this belief in the 'Age of Aquarius'. Um?

Siddhiratna: There's something.... well one notion that whenever I've spoken to people about this, one notion that has come through, and it's usually backed up by pseudo-scientific fact, the idea that planets actually send out rays, that they have tubs of liquids in deep mines which can catch them and you can photograph, so that if the planets are in motion some sort of cosmic sense that the influences of different planets will be more effective in different periods of time, which may affect the way human consciousness, the human mind or brain functions.

S: Well yes, because obviously everything in the Universe does influence everything else. Look at the way in which the Sun influences the Earth. It influences the vegetation, it influences all organic bodies, and it even influences us psychologically, because if it's a fine bright morning we look out of the window, we feel better, yeah? In the same way the Moon, it is well known, influences vegetation, influences the tides, influences so many things, influences the human body.

Siddhiratna: Sheep dancing!

S: Yeh? Um? So there doesn't seem to be anything - what shall I say - anything inconsistent in assuming that possibly the other heavenly bodies influence the Earth also, and even human life. But that is a quite different thing from saying that they decide and determine the direction of the individual consciousness decisively. Yes? Um? Do you see what I mean?

Siddhiratna: I do but I don't see how one can prove that. I mean the case would still hold because it would be possible to say that anything that you think you are deciding is in fact not you deciding it, it's the motion of the planets.

S: Ah, yeh. Well in that case you have then to accept that you are not the master of your own destiny as an individual, which of course contradicts the basic assumption, if you like, of Buddhism. So whichever you might decide is true, you cannot hold both at the same time. You cannot be trying to follow a spiritual path by your own unaided efforts, as it were, but at the same time hold that it's an automatic process depending upon planetary changes. So if one is trying to develop as an individual the assumption is that it depends upon your effort. I mean, there may be external factors helping or hindering, but ultimately it depends upon you, which is of course the Buddhist position. Therefore the idea of an 'Aquarian Age' automatically, sort of, ushered in, is inconsistent with the Buddhist approach - you can't accept both simultaneously.

Siddhiratna: As determining factors, as it were....

S: Um. Yes.

Sagaramati: You could accept the fact that because of this planetary influence the conditions that you live in might be slightly changed.

S: Yes. But as far as we can see as regards external changes, all the changes that seem to be taking place seem to be taking place for the worse.

Mangala: But at the same time it does appear to be a lot more people interested in, let's say spiritual development, provisionally.

S: I don't know about that. I really don't know about that. I think when we say that it is very often because we just haven't studied history. Look at all the movements during the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the 17th Century, even the 18th Century, 19th Century, there's scores upon scores of all sorts of spiritual movements - yes?

Mangala: Perhaps it's just getting a lot of publicity.

S: There is also that, there is also that.

Devamitra: Maybe it's because life's become so alienated in modern society that there's certain elements which are missing and they're looking for....

S: I'm not convinced that people are looking now more than they used to in the past. I mean, as the result of a bit of study of history I'm not convinced of that in the least.

Devamitra: But are we actually - I'm suggesting that they're looking for some kind of group comfort rather than something higher.

S: Well you could say that of some of the movements of the past. But there are - I mean the prevalence of what we might call religious-cum-mystical movements at present is I think not any greater than it has been in past centuries.

Mangala: Would you say that any period, I mean, even what's been termed the Axial period, because (unclear) there was more genuine spiritual seeking in that period.

S: I think so, yes. I think probably there was.

Mangala: I mean would that just have been confined to, sort of, the intelligentsia, or to

S: Not necessarily, because that isn't the picture that we get from the Pali Scriptures. Was there an intelligentsia even, in the modern sense. There wasn't a literate intelligentsia then as there is now, because there wasn't literacy in our modern sense.

S: I should have thought that, in fact there was more spiritual aspirations among the population as a whole in the past because there was less distraction then, there was less communication in the sense of travel etc., etc, so that people's attention would have been more focused on their conditions.

S: On the existential situation. So I think we have to be very careful about some of those very rash generalisations. For instance, you hear say, or even they write, 'Well nowadays there are more people interested in spiritual life than ever before.' Well there may be in quantitative terms, but not proportionately. And that this therefore means that the Age of Aquarius is coming in - all such rash

generalisations I feel, and not borne out by even a cursory study of history. But, I mean, the biggest point, the most important factor is that it's a species of determinism, as I've said, of historicism, and you think in terms of being swept along by something sort of global almost, even cosmic, rather than yourself as an individual making an effort to develop. In other words it all becomes a sort of mass movement, quite literally, and how can a spiritual movement be a mass movement?

For instance, there is that book, that well known book for a few months, 'The Greening of America'. Do you remember that? Or have you forgotten it all? Was it before your time?

Mangala: Charles Reich.

S: Yes. Um. Yes. Do you remember that, 'The Greening of America'? 'Consciousness 1', 'Consciousness 2' and 'Consciousness 3'. The 'Consciousness 1', what was that, do you remember? That was the consciousness of the settled citizen, especially in the Old World - yes? 'Consciousness 2' was the consciousness of the American frontiersman and frontierswoman, the pioneer, and now there's 'Consciousness 3' emerging on account of the media explosion, all that sort of thing. Yeh? And he clearly stated that these consciousnesses arose as a result of changes in external circumstances, but he also clearly regarded them as progressive - that 'Consciousness 3' was higher than 'Consciousness 2', 'Consciousness 2' higher than 'Consciousness 1'. He gave no proof for this whatever, but he seemed to assume that because they were later, therefore they were higher, which is the old fallacy of progress. 'Because it's later, therefore it's a higher development.' You see what I mean? So the way people talk about the emergence of the 'Aquarian Age Consciousness' is very much like the way in which he talks about his 'Consciousness 3'. It's a new consciousness - because it's new it, sort of, must be higher, even though it's come into existence, in a determined sort of way.

Mangala: A bit like, I suppose we generally tend to think that the Egyptians and these sort of civilisations were barbaric and uncultured and uncivilised, I mean compared to us today.

S: But this is because we think of progress in purely technological terms.

Siddhiratna: One could posit that because it's later it's therefore a synthesis of those that had died out, and if you say why did they die out, it's because they weren't really in touch or they hadn't really mastered X, Y and Z and that therefore....

S: What does one mean by synthesis?

Siddhiratna: culture would have got the best out of the older cultures.

S: What does one mean? People say these things, but they don't, if one looks into them carefully, don't really have any meaning. What does one mean by 'synthesis'? What does one mean by 'getting the best out of'. You can have an anthology of all these Scriptures of the whole world, you might say 'you're in a better position than a man in the old days who just had one.' But are you necessarily just because you've got all those Scriptures in the pages of a single book, and can thumb through them sitting comfortably in your armchair? Are you really better off? Have you made a real, effective spiritual synthesis? Have you? I think people are misleading themselves with words. But this is the sort of thing you get proclaimed from platforms, by people like Sir George Trevelyan, and it's this which the 'Festival of Mind and Body' is supposed to be illustrating, and of which we are supposed to be a part, we the FWBO, of this Great Process! So it becomes very important to understand these things.

But even Buddhists, you see, are a bit guilty of this sort of thinking. There's an 'Age of Darkness' or an 'Age of Light' or a 'New Age' or an 'Aquarian Age' - even some Buddhists seem to have thought like this in the past.

Vajradaka: There's the Theravadin thing....

S: Yes.

Vajradaka: ... the influence of the Buddha being more sort of difficult to become. Now it's almost impossible for anyone...

S: Yes. Um. Um.

Subhuti: It does seem generally that people, even within their own lives tend to think either back to a golden age in the past, or look forward to a golden age in the future.

S: Yes. Um.

Subhuti: That's the way people tend to (unclear)

S: Yes. Well it's the way whole cultures, whole civilisations think.

Vajradaka: But you know, the 'Axial Age' - I'm not saying it in a sort of deterministic or historicistic way - could one just sort of say that it was more a matter of spiritual influence that was just sort of arising as a result of people's efforts breaking through sort of at the crust, and then

S: Well perhaps it isn't really, though I borrowed this term from Jaspers, perhaps it isn't really quite correct to speak of it as an 'Age', if by an 'Age' one means something collective and all pervasive at the time and influencing everybody. No, it's simply that at that time, over that particular period, you had an unusually large number of outstanding Individuals of all kinds, and that was the first time in history, as far as we know that Individuals of that sort did appear in numbers of that kind. But whether strictly speaking we should allow ourselves to speak of that as being an 'Age' - well, that can be queried, it might give rise to misunderstanding, that it was an 'Age' in the 'Aquarian Age' sense.

Vajradaka: It just, sort of, changes the swing of the emphasis, from sort of planetary influence to human influence.

S: Yes, that's true, yes. It isn't a planetary age, yes it's a human age. It's not an astrological age, it's a spiritual age. Do you see what I mean?

Vajradaka: I can relate to that. I don't think that there's very much danger in that as long as one sort of does at the same time recognise that one has to make efforts oneself and be open to others.

S: Um. Yeh. No doubt in medieval India Buddhism was running down, and a lot of prominent teachers, including Vasubandhu as quoted by Conze seem to have taken a rather gloomy view of the prospects of the Buddhadharma, but they seem to have extrapolated from the situation in India itself, whereas in China Buddhism was really flourishing, and in Japan it was just starting on a very brilliant period of many hundreds of years. What to speak of Tibet; I mean, the greater part of the history of Tibetan Buddhism was still in the future then - a very glorious future indeed. *[Pause]*

But the great danger is that you think, 'Well, this is the Age of Darkness, or the Age of Decline, I can't do very much; I have to wait for another age, for more propitious circumstances. The Japanese apparently seem not to have done that in some cases; they seem to have said, 'Well this is the Age of Decline, therefore we must exert ourselves more' which is a very healthy sort of reaction.

Vajradaka: There's something I've been thinking about for the last couple of weeks, about the Nichirens - how they seem to sort of say, I think it was Nichiren himself who was like the new Maitreya, and sort of founded the New Age and...

S: Well in a way you do start a New Age when you get a great new Individual, and he succeeds in influencing a sufficient number of other Individuals - then you get a New Age, in the sense of the Axial Age, an age of that kind.

Siddhiratna: What time was Nichiren?

S: Nichiren was, I think, 13th Century.

Siddhiratna: Isn't it safer to talk about 'Periods' rather than 'Ages' in a way? (unclear)

Sagaramati: Even then, there are certain factors in our time that haven't existed before

S: Oh, this is true. I would say that they're mostly deleterious to the spiritual life, not favourable. Um. Yeh.

_____ : What are they and why is that?

Sagaramati: Bombs. The world can be wiped out. That's not existed before.

Mangala: What about, for example the fact, as you've often pointed out that, you know, anybody (Inaudible) can read any of the great world teachings and they're all available to them, whereas a hundred years ago that wouldn't have been on.

S: It's only availability, even so. One could also say 'Availability has meant vulgarisation.' And devaluation - one could say that also.

Vajradaka: You see that even in just this book. How to sort of get into *Tummo*.

S: Um. Yeh. Right. Um.

Siddhiratna: The threat of the bomb think is really... like having that threat of the bomb you've offset sort of plagues and famines which really don't occur on such a great scale and wipe out so many people. It seems to me always a balance between, sort of, forces which are against and forces which are for, which in some ways you need that. So I feel that that struggle is actually necessary.

Sagaramati: Well you could say - I mean I look at the bomb positively. If it hadn't been for the bomb there would have been wars and that and we wouldn't be here probably. I think there would have been a World War and it would've involved us, so we wouldn't be here. It's given us a sort of period of time so we can get something on.

S: You mean, if there hadn't been a cold war there would certainly have been a hot war.

Sagaramati: Yes.

S: Um. They dare not have a hot war. Which doesn't mean that they won't have one. (Pause) But anyway, you see what I'm getting at overall, eh? That we shouldn't allow our spiritual life to depend upon those external, as it were, collective factors. And I think to sort of try to whip up people's enthusiasm and to get them into the spiritual life, saying 'Oh, you know, the Aquarian Age has started' and it's like a great bandwagon that we all climb onto - yeh? This is a completely false and

misleading approach.

Siddhiratna: And vice-versa, the *Kali-Yuga* shouldn't dissuade you.

S: Um. Right. Yeh.

Devamitra: Maybe we should speak on 'Buddhism and the 'Aquarian Age'.

S: Um. That wouldn't be a bad idea, would it? (Laughter)

Mangala: It would draw in a lot of people I think.

S: Yeh, I'd watch them all leaving, by the dozen! (Laughter)

Manjuvajra: Why are we involving ourselves with something like the 'Festival of Mind and Body?' (Laughter) I asked myself that question when I was there last year.

S: Well, I think it was two things. First of all, we do get into contact with a lot of people by that means, which you wouldn't have had otherwise and, two, we are enabled to show where we differ.

_____ : Are we?

S: Well I think this is a point that seems to have registered as far as quite a lot of people were concerned, who came into contact with us.

Mangala: I don't know. I think in a way it can be very hard because people see you there and they almost automatically think well, you're the same as him just over there, and it's quite difficult, I think, to actually get that idea out of their heads.

S: But bear in mind also that the majority of the people who come don't even know anything about the Aquarian Age - it's just a big sort of festival at Olympia. Their ignorance is your advantage in a way; and they're not affected by their ideology - the majority of them I would say - they just happen to go along. It's something that's advertised. They maybe they haven't even thought about the Aquarian Age, or perhaps heard about it before.

Subhuti: It was quite striking - at least while I was there - very few people did seem to identify with the overall objectives of the Festival. The only people who did were people who were already, sort of, committed to something or other.

S: I'm afraid that we are going to be misunderstood. Not only in that way, the mere fact that we call ourselves Buddhists, and we are Buddhist, that is a source of misunderstanding, because there are all sorts of other Buddhist groups in the world, in this country, in London - we don't resemble them at all. It's completely misleading that we have the same label as they do. I mean, I have to say 'Well that's because they aren't really Buddhist at all', I think. But what can we do - we can't stop using the label, because that in fact is what we are - there's bound to be misunderstandings.

Manjuvajra: I mean, surely with other Buddhist groups, if they're following the Dharma at all, they must be, they must be.....

S: (Interrupting) I doubt if they are following the Dharma at all really, except in the cultural sense, to some extent. There seem to be far too many misunderstandings on their part.

Manjuvajra: I hear this when I do come into contact with some people from other Buddhist groups,

I'm surprised that, you know, the fact that they do seem to express, they do seem to be Buddhists. I've got to the stage now where I'm surprised when I meet Buddhists to find that they actually are Buddhists, or at least that they have some of the....

S: I'm surprised too!

Siddhiratna: You mean, Buddhists in FWBO terms.

Manjuvajra: Yeah.

S: I must say I doubt it. Because when I read the literature produced by some of the people at the very top, I doubt it. I doubt it most then. It seems to me the rot seems to have started from the top. There seems so much confusion of thought there. I mean even with say regard to this question of Going for Refuge. I think some of the people that you meet are nice people anyway, and they would have been nice friendly people, even if they hadn't been Buddhists.

Manjuvajra: (Interrupting) I'm not particularly about nice people, but I mean, like this matter of Refuge. I've talked with some people who've taken refuge with one of the Tibetan groups in Cornwall, and so I said 'Well, this is unusual, why were they giving Refuge to thousands of people like that, and at least the Tibetans who were doing it had an answer. They realised that they were doing something that was a bit unusual, a bit strange, but they had a reason for doing it, which was they feel that the teaching is liable to get lost, so they're just going to chuck the seeds out.

S: Well I would say that is a completely wrong way of thinking; it's so utterly literalistic. It isn't like literally chucking a seed out, it isn't! Yeh?

Manjuvajra: But I know someone who did go along to that, did take Refuge, and it had a very strong effect on him, much stronger effect than three years contact with the Friends had, and he actually started doing practice, quite seriously.

S: But he had to have three years contact with the Friends! (laughter)

_____ : But you might be receiving the knowledge from a Divine Light whatever, and have a very strong effect on some people for a while. I mean how deep does it go, and what is it they're getting?

S: I must say that over the last - thirty years ago I started off thinking that everybody knows better than me, this was actually what I honestly felt thirty years ago, I mean 'other' meaning other Buddhists. But with great reluctance I've sort of gradually been forced step by step into the position of almost thinking that nobody knows better than me! (laughter) It's an appalling thought in a way! (Laughter) I almost think this now, without liking to in the least - yeh? (Laughter) Anyway, it's a horrifying thought, because if you think how the Dharma has been misunderstood. I mean, I can hardly pick up a new book on Buddhism or open a Buddhist magazine without being mortally offended. (Laughter)

I mean, the latest 'Middle Way' - I'm going to raise one or two points from that in the afternoon - the latest 'Middle Way' - a very much better production - I'm glad to see the changes that they've made, but all this work that they write about Buddhism and science!? I mean the inconsistencies and absurdities and misunderstandings - it's amazing! Have you read this? What they have written about Buddhism and science. I mean, it's astonishing! (Laughter). I mean it's just so utterly wrong; it's so superficial; they haven't done any real thinking, or at least the chap who wrote the article hasn't. But this is right in the forefront, this is their new approach - 'Western Buddhism is going to be Scientific Buddhism'. They don't seem to know what Buddhism is, they don't seem to know what science is.

This is the sort of thing that brings Buddhism into contempt with thinking people. Anyone that knew anything about science would just toss it aside - someone like Vajrabodhi wouldn't read more than about two sentences.

So I'm afraid this, unfortunately, is the position. There's very very few people in the Buddhist world that are known, and with whom we have some sort of contact - there may well be others - that seem to have any real idea of what Buddhism is actually about. That is in a way quite unfortunate, that there is all this misunderstanding. There is for instance, someone like Tarthang Tulku, I feel that in his case there is something genuine, some real understanding and so on, but in the case of many of the other Tibetans I don't feel that at all. I mean, one of the things that puzzles me about the Tibetans is this. They are going around now establishing all these centres and giving out all these Tantric teachings - I mean, what was happening in Tibet until they were driven out by the Chinese? Nobody ever thought of coming to the West, yeh? I mean, this is something that one must seriously ask oneself - where was their Bodhisattva Vow? Yeh? I mean, here were the wretched narrow-minded, individualistic Theravadins doing their best to spread the Dharma, going to America and going to India and all sorts of other places, what were the Tibetans doing with so many Incarnate Bodhisattvas, huh? And so many hundreds of thousands of people reciting Bodhisattva Vows - they never thought of spreading Buddhism in the West. Hindus even thought of spreading Hinduism, Jains thought of spreading Jainism, Zen people even tried to get to America, Shin Buddhists went to America, but what did the Tibetan Buddhists do? Nothing. Yeh? So why, now they are thinking in terms of spreading Buddhism in the West. But for the majority of them, what has it become? It's become a livelihood for them as refugees. With a few exceptions that's the truth. Yeh? But how can we not see this? So, it's not surprising that they really go wrong. There are a few really sincere ones, we know that, but I think that's only say one in a dozen at the most. So we just can't fool ourselves or close our eyes to these facts. If they really were great Bodhisattvas, why did they not think of the West before they had to? Before it became almost an economic necessity to think about Western people. Yeh?

So, this is actually the position, And when one sees, reading some of these American journals, their advertisements, Tantric teachings advertised almost for sale, what can one think of that? Can they have a true understanding? It's alright to say well they must be, but you don't preserve Esoteric Teachings by giving them to people who are not ready to receive them - that's the quickest way to destroy them.

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You find one person - this is the Tantric Tradition of India - you find one person to whom they can really be transmitted - you've done your duty then. Um? Um? But to hand them out to hundreds and even thousands of people, what good does this do? It doesn't do any good at all. It just hastens the decline of the Dharma. That is the decline of the Dharma.

Mangala: I think all this popularisation is ultimately detrimental rather than.... you know, paperback books...

S: I think left to itself it is detrimental, but I think we can make good use of it, to some extent, if it at least does make people aware that there is such a thing as Buddhism, and if that leads them to us. Yes? But it again could put a lot of people off.

Devamitra: I must say I can only see it could have a detrimental effect. I mean I read in the 'Middle Way' that there were some Tibetan groups going to establish twelve centres in this country. I found that quite horrific to contemplate, because so many people will be misled and it makes it more difficult for us to get in (Inaudible) people.

Siddhiratna: I think there's another side to all this, which is - I remember I think it was Padmavajra, went along to the Buddhist Society, to a sort of talk or discussion or something - actually somebody took him along - and, I think it was something to do with Tibetan Buddhism, and what he was reporting, he said the whole evening seemed very flat, a little bit sort of stultifying for some reason and he asked his friend whether this was normally the case, and his friend said 'Well, no, it's not actually, it's because the person leading it knew you were from the FWBO and he's feeling very inhibited, because you've got a very heavy reputation. I think we have to be in some senses by being quite out front about who we are and what we are, we have to be careful not to alienate people at the same time by becoming heavy handed in certain cases.

Vajradaka: But I don't think that that was necessarily true because Mike Hookham, the man who was leading that class is quite a nervous person anyway.

S: Yes. I've known him for a long time.

Siddhiratna: Yes. I think that's an example of what, you know, well maybe that's so, so therefore that example is not very valid but I think that as an example it's.....

S: I think that's rather a good thing, that they're a bit on their toes, otherwise they can get away with saying almost anything. And why should people be allowed to get away with saying anything about Buddhism when it isn't correct? They know that if there's someone from the FWBO then they might be challenged. Whereas none of the old ladies sitting there would even dream of challenging them. It's not good for you not to be challenged. Yeh? I mean even if you're challenged with wrong motive it's quite good for you as a speaker actually. What to speak of challenge with a good motive, by someone who knows something about the subject. Yeh?

Siddhiratna: (Inaudible) so the motive in fact has to be good, or has to be...

S: (Interrupting) I think it isn't a bad thing if we have a reputation of being different from everybody else and a bit difficult even, so that people are a bit wary. I think that's not at all a bad thing. Anyway, we've gone a bit off track, haven't we.

Alright - 'This human life in the Kali-Yuga (or Age of Darkness) being so brief and uncertain' - which it is at the best of times anyway - 'it would be a cause of regret to spend it in worldly aims and pursuits.' Well, you've only got a little time, you've only got a little energy - spend it in the very best possible way that you can, don't waste it. This is really what the verse, what the Precept is saying. Any further point arising out of all that? (Long pause).

Alright - Precept 4 - 'One's own mind being of the nature of the Dharmakaya, uncreated, it would be a cause of regret to let it be swallowed up in the morass of the world's illusions.' So, 'One's own mind being of the nature of the Dharmakaya' - I mean, what is the *Dharmakaya*? I mean, this is clearly the specifically Mahayana point of view, but what exactly does it mean? (Pause). Put it in maybe more general terms - 'One's own mind being of the nature of the Dharmakaya' - what does this mean?

_____ : Ultimate Reality.

S: Ultimate Reality.

Devamitra: Is it sort of hinting at the seeds of Buddhahood, potential for Enlightenment.

S: It's putting it, in a way, more strongly than that. It's not, you know, speaking in terms of potentiality, it's not using the language of potentiality - it's one's own mind being of the nature of the

Dharmakaya.

Devamitra: Like the Zen approach - you are Buddha.

S: Yes. Um. Yes.

Siddhiratna: It seems to be talking about purity doesn't it, in a sense, that purity gets swallowed up in the morass.

Mangala: Undefined.

S: Undefined - yes, yes.

Sagaramati: But can you take that concretely?

S: Hmm. Hmm. But it isn't as though one was, here and now, actually, consciously, in possession of the Dharmakaya, and therefore have to be careful not to let it be swallowed up in the morass of the world's illusions - it isn't that. I mean, so far from one's own mind actually being in that sense, of the nature of the Dharmakaya, one rather wonders about it, what does it mean? (Laughter) Yes? So maybe, putting it more realistically, what is it that one must not let be swallowed up in the morass of the world's illusions - say something that one actually has?

Devamitra Spiritual aspiration?

S: Spiritual aspiration, yes.

Vajradaka Even your meditation.

S: Even your meditation. Or your ideal, you could say.

Siddhiratna: Are we putting that, are we reading those instead of *Dharmakaya*?

S: Well yes, it seems, you know, almost unrealistic to speak in those terms, yes? Um? Because the point is one has lost the *Dharmakaya* in the morass of the world's illusions, so to speak. Yes? One has, I mean that is the present state, it is lost, because you don't consciously experience it here and now - where is it? Where is your *Dharmakaya*? The Zen people say 'Well show me your Buddha Mind'- well, of course you can't'. Yeh? Um? So you can't show your *Dharmakaya*, there's no question of your losing it, you've lost it! Um? That is the actual position. Um? It has been swallowed up by the morass of the world's illusions. You don't even know that you've lost it - you don't even know for sure that you actually had it. Yeh? Do you - really? All that you know is that you don't, in a conscious aware sense, have it now. You just don't have it, you've just got an ordinary mind. So what meaning can this have for one? 'One's own mind being of the nature of the *Dharmakaya*, uncreated, it would be a cause of regret to let it be swallowed up in the morass of the world's illusions'. The most that you can manage is, well, not to let your ideals be swallowed up. Um? Do you see what I mean? In other words, it's a question of knowing where one is at just at this moment.

Devamitra: This seems quite an unskilful way to put it.

S: Well, depending on who it is addressed to.

Devamitra: Who could it be addressed to, meaningfully?

S: It's like saying to someone, 'Look, be very careful that all those millions you've got you don't

waste, you invest them properly' - you haven't even got sixpence in your pocket! It's a bit like that, isn't it?

Devamitra: But I mean, somebody who's in possession of the *Dharmakaya*, or whatever...

S: But if you're in possession of it, could you lose it? Could you lose it?

Devamitra: Well no, so I mean it's a pointless.....

S: In a way it is, actually, looking at it from that point of view.

Manjuvajra: I think it could mean that your own mind is of the nature of the *Dharmakaya*, however it's all caught up in the morass of the world's illusions, but don't let it be totally swallowed by them.

S: It has been totally swallowed - eh?

Manjuvajra: Not totally - there must be a little

S: Well, what is that? What is that? Has one even a little glimpse? Of the *Dharmakaya*?

Manjuvajra: You must feel its influence to a certain extent, otherwise you wouldn't be involved in any form of spiritual practice.

S: Ah. Ah. So you can look at it from the standpoint, say, of the awakening of faith, and say that there is a reflection. There is a reflection, however dim, one at least has that, or however distorted - it is that that you must preserve at all costs - at least that. This is not what the text says, but one could understand it in that way. Yes? So what form does that reflection take? Well, that is one's basic aspiration, one's basic ideal, as it were, well one can say well that is the reflection of the *Dharmakaya* - the fact that you can have that at all, means that back of your ordinary mind there is the mind which is of the nature of the *Dharmakaya*. Yeh? Um?

Vajradaka: I remember when we went through the 'Awakening of Faith' you sort of drew a circle and had segments, and part one segment was total experience and like part of oneself was in some way reflecting the *Dharmakaya*, reflected Absolute Reality.

S: Um. Um.

Vajradaka: You could, sort of, say, part of you was reality, but it didn't actually manifest itself.

S: Yes. Yes. Um. That's at the most we have this reflection, so to speak, in a manner of speaking.

Sagaramati: Why do they call it a '*Kaya*'? What is it about the word 'body'?

S: The word 'body' mustn't be understood literally - as 'body' as opposed to 'mind' - it is '*Kaya*'. I think Guenther points out that the ordinary Sanskrit word for 'body' you know, in the ordinary, is '*deha*'. '*Kaya*' means something different. I don't know quite how to render this in English. How does he translate it, '*Kaya*'? how does Guenther translate it? I don't think he actually translates it.

Manjuvajra: He uses '*Dharmakaya*'.

S: For instance, he translates '*Nirmanakaya*' as 'being in' what is it? - not being in the present - it's your actual sort of existential being in the here and now. The '*Sambhogakaya*' is your 'ideal being' and the '*Dharmakaya*' your 'Absolute being'. I think he just uses the word '*Dharmakaya*'.

Sagaramati: It's almost 'being' that he translates.

S: Um. Um. A '*Kaya*' is almost like a '*Gestalt*'.

_____ : What is a '*Gestalt*'?

S: It's a sort of - oh well! You see, when we speak of a 'body' usually, we mean, a 'body' is an organism, isn't it? It's not just a collection of parts as the motor of a car is. Yeh? Um? It's not just a collection of things which are external to one another. It's a sort of inter-relation of living things, it's a sort of living whole if you like, so the '*Kaya*' is the sort of living whole.

_____ : An integrated system.

S: An integrated system, yes. Which doesn't have to be material. [Pause] But anyway if we speak in terms of a reflection of the *Dharmakaya*, and apply it to this Precept, it suggests that even that reflection can be lost. What we have to be careful of is not to lose the reflection. So how can that reflection be lost? How is it 'swallowed up in the morass of the world's illusions'? I mean, how does that happen?

Manjuvajra: Through doubt?

S: Through doubt, yes.

Vajradaka: Recklessness.

S: Recklessness, which is an extreme form of unmindfulness.

_____ : Lack of contact with one's....

S: Lack of contact, yes. It's swallowed up in all these ways.

Siddhiratna: Some of those things are words to describe something but I think the experience of it is I find it's something like growing up, I think one can think in terms of maturing, but often that means sort of cutting off the youthful idealism and then the way that you view that past youthful idealism was something kind of trivial.

S: Yes, you adopt a cynical attitude towards it.

Siddhiratna: Yes, and that seems to come as you get older, I suppose, unless you stay in contact, in terms of doubt and faith.

S: Yes. Um. Um. Do you ever have the experience of going into a certain situation, and then after a while, maybe when you're out of that situation, realising that while you were in it, while you were in that situation, the reflection of the *Dharmakaya*, so to speak, had been swallowed up? I mean, do you ever have that sort of experience? Yeh?

Siddhiratna: Leaving it at the door, as it were and forgetting to pick it up on the way out.

S: Yes. And do you, for instance, ever sort of think, well, you know, supposing I hadn't got out of that situation, or supposing I hadn't ever remembered, or realised what I'd lost - well, what then?

Ajita: Two hours with the family and that's enough, thank you.

S: Pardon?

Ajita: Two hours with the family and it feels as if you're losing your (one word inaudible) as it were.

S: Um. But if you're actually feeling that you're losing it, you're not losing, you haven't lost it. Yeh? It's when you unthinkingly immerse yourself and don't even remember till afterwards, and don't even remember until afterwards what has happened.

Ajita: You feel a sort of conflict there, as if there was a new force of energy coming which is buffeting you a bit

S: Yeh. Well so long as you're in a situation of conflict, you know, in this way, you haven't actually lost the reflection.

Ajita: Ah!

Siddhiratna: It seems to be a sort of subtle form of what we were talking about yesterday with Mitras who - I can't remember exactly what it was - but they come in and just a little thing like an old friend turns up and suddenly you forget to come back next week, as it were.

S: Yes. Right.

Siddhiratna: It's a subtle form of that.

S: Yes. Um.

Sagaramati: (Inaudible) from your visualisation practice - a reflection.

S: That's true. Yes. Right. Yes. You're trying to see through into your own mind. I mean, what you visualise is, your own mind as *Dharmakaya*. This is really what you're visualising. The visualised form being, as it were, on the *Sambhogakaya* level so to speak. But through that you see his Voidness is the *Dharmakaya*.

Kamalasila: Isn't this Precept more saying that 'One's own mind being of the nature of the *Dharmakaya*' - the emphasis isn't on it actually being the *Dharmakaya*, but it's of the same nature. There's an affinity between the two.

S: Um. Um. Yes, one could put it that way. Yeh. Um. Yes, one could take the 'cause of regret to let it be swallowed up in the morass of the world's illusions' to refer to the mind rather than to, say, the *Dharmakaya* mind. The *Dharmakaya* mind is swallowed up already anyway, but it would be a great cause of regret to let the mind itself, which has the possibility of reflecting the *Dharmakaya*, to be swallowed up. In other words, one's awareness and mindfulness generally.

Subhuti: It's a bit of an analogy with the 'Buddha Pride' - that your mind is sort of almost a relation of the *Dharmakaya*.

S: Yes. Yes. You could speak in Neo-Platonic language and say a 'ray'. [Pause]

Kamalasila: Why does it say it's 'uncreated'?

S: I'm not sure what word that represents - it could be 'Unconditioned' - that it is Absolute, it is of the Transcendental order. It doesn't arise in dependence of causes and conditions - it's outside time,

outside space. *[Pause]*

Alright, any further comment on four? Have we exhausted the subject? I would have thought there was a lot more that could have been said on that.

Vajradaka: Well there's lots of ways that it happens.

S: Um. How many ways were actually mentioned - did anyone list them?

_____ : Four.

S: Um? Doubt, recklessness, lack of contact. I'm sure there were other points made.

Sagaramati: One becomes sort of infatuated.

S: Yes, that could be....

Sagaramati: Mistaking it and you think you're in a really positive state, and something happens in that state, and you mistake what happens as being of the same order as your positive states.

S: Yes. Yes.

_____ : Infatuation always fades though, doesn't it, so you can't get ...

Sagaramati: I mean, there may be a better word than 'infatuation'.

S: Intoxication?

Sagaramati: Intoxication, yes.

S: That comes pretty close to recklessness, doesn't it?

Devamitra: General loss of vision.

S: Loss of vision; loss of inspiration.

Devamitra: And also, I think, it may be loss of perspective too.

S: Um. Yes. Then of course there's the whole influence of society, the prevailing culture, and so on. They're all trends. *[Pause]*

It would seem as though it's a very sort of tricky period, that between the formation of the initial aspiration and Stream Entry - because you can fall away - indefinitely, you know, at any time prior to Stream Entry.

Devamitra: What we were really talking about is all the things that can get in between us and Stream Entry.

S: Yes. I mean, assuming that the initial aspiration has arisen. So that is a sort of temporary thing and unless it is kept alive by constant effort and awareness, it will go. So your effort must be to keep it alive until such time as it cannot be extinguished because Stream Entry has been gained. In other words, unless you take steps to keep that aspiration alive it will die away. Yes?

Sagaramati: I would say the conflict sometimes is how much you let yourself go - there are so many things you can see that are out of tune with that aspiration. At the same time you feel like you can't cut off from everything.

S: Um. Yeh. Otherwise the reaction, or corresponding feeling of dryness would be too great. There's a very fine point sometimes to decide it, because you can rationalise, you can bluff, you can fool and deceive yourself so easily. Yeh? Yeh? On the other hand, it cannot be a purely willed process, as a result of purely mental conceptions. It must be a growth.

Devamitra: So really then, the main purpose or one of the main purposes of the Spiritual Community is to keep the aspirations of the individuals involved alive.

S: Yes.

Devamitra: (Inaudible due to banging plate noises!) should be attained by one or two of them.

S: Yes. Um. Um. At least over a period of years. And if they continue making that conscious effort. (Long pause).

Mangala: It's like the fourth aspect of Perfect Effort, isn't it, maintaining skilful states of mind.

S: Um. Ah. Right. Yes. Exactly. Yes, indeed, yes. It's as though the first thing you do is to get rid of the unskilful state that has arisen. Then the next is to keep it out; then bring into existence the skilful state that hasn't yet been brought into existence, and then, fourthly, keep that skilful state that has been brought into existence in existence. Um? And you just have to keep on doing that - in all ways possible. It seems to me that one of the big difficulties, even dangers, is, that when you start feeling dull and flat you try to stimulate yourself or rekindle your inspiration in the wrong sort of way. Do you see what I mean? In a way that would be a distraction rather than a rekindling of interest and inspiration.

Vajradaka: I can't relate to that. Can you give some examples?

S: Well supposing you are feeling very dull and flat, you say, 'Oh let's just go and see a film.' But you didn't choose the film - just sort of any old film will do - and actually going to see it, it might get you out of your dullness and flatness, but into a very distracted sort of state of mind, which might be no less harmful, perhaps even more harmful. But supposing you'd gone to see a film, but supposing you'd just chosen something quite carefully so that it would sort of buck you up, but at the same time might maybe give you something to think about and not have an unpleasant emotional effect upon you. Or you might decide to go to a concert. Or just to go and see someone that was very positive and spiritually minded, so to speak.

Mangala: The trouble is, when you're in a sort of a negative state, the very makings of that which you're trying to find something positive to (unclear) the negative state.

S: Yes, indeed. Yeh. Yeh. But then that's where your spiritual friends come in or fellow members of the Spiritual Community. I mean, they, hopefully, are in a more positive frame of mind than you are, and they can suggest more positive ways of overcoming your dullness and flatness - or just help you out of it just by being with you and being positive and affirmative themselves.

Sagaramati: That could be a bit difficult. I mean you might (Inaudible) community, and the other members of the community tend to depend on you, so if you're feeling dull and flat sometimes they don't want to... they get a bit sort of.....

S: Yes. Well that's when they're in a sort of, as it were, junior position, and accustomed to being bucked up by you. Well you just have to go off and meditate then. Maybe feeling a bit sorry for yourself but - what else can you do? - just go in your own room and play your favourite records and hope that they will do the trick. Yes? Um? It's like children, they don't want to know about the parents' troubles, and one has to accept that.

Sona: It sometimes seems to help if you actually do nothing.

S: Um. Yes.

Sona: And allow yourself to get bored. You can get a bit negative but it seems to pass after a time because it's so boring.

S: Well then you feel like doing something and you go and do it. Yes. You feel alright then. *(Long pause)*

Sagaramati: You definitely feel like that, as you go on, when you feel much more, sort of, alone in that way. You realise that your state is becoming more and more dependent on yourself.

S: Yes, right. Yes. Um.

Sagaramati: Things that maybe used to sort of trip you up in the past, these don't work so much. They don't have the same sort of effect.

S: Perhaps you don't need them so much. I think as you mature, you know, in the true sense, you do become less dependent upon external factors, and more able to depend on yourself.

Well just as a matter of interest most of you've been chairmen of Centres - how do you manage when you feel a bit flat yourselves, and you know you can't depend upon anybody else in the immediate vicinity, because they're depending upon you - what does one do?

Sagaramati: I usually read a Seminar, or listen to music, that's about the two things I do. I definitely find study in some way can really trigger you off.

S: That's a very good point. Yes.

Devamitra: Actually something I've found that has helped me has been writing, just sit down and write, or listening to some music as well.

Ajita: I usually walk through the town actually, just look at people, just walk and look.

Sona: One of the things I've found is just physical work. *(Laughter)* I think when you start feeling sorry for yourself, if you do something quite active you don't allow yourself to think, you sort of get over it.

S: How does walking through the town?

Ajita: It's like, I find it quite interesting just to look at people, and sometimes get an understanding of what's going on, you know, it sort of takes you out. I find reading doesn't help me too much or listening to music.

Sona: Someone said, was it last Order Day or maybe another occasion that if you're feeling down, I forget that instance but go and look at someone who's even more down than you are! *(Laughter)* That

was it - Ratnaguna about standing outside Strangeways prison. He said that if you ever felt down, just go and watch the prison officers going into Strangeways prison and you'll realise what you've got! Probably walking through a town's a bit like that actually.

S: Um. Yes.

Sona: You looked at the other people, and ..

Ajita: It's got to be the energy I would think. There's a lot of energy at about 12 or 1 o'clock in the lunchtime break. I quite like feeling the energy. It's not too negative. It seems a bit more negative at night.

Anoma: Actually I find that I used to think I shouldn't go and sort of talk about things that are going on in me with people in the Community if I was... you know, I sort of felt people were looking to me, I thought I couldn't, sort of, go to them if I had something to talk about, but then I thought this was an unreal situation, because obviously I did have things come up with me, same as anybody really, and it's was a sort of false situation, so now I'll go and talk to anybody as much as they'll talk to me, or....

S: And they're quite willing to listen?

Anoma: Yeh. I mean I don't if they're in a bad state themselves.

S: Well what do you do when, as might happen occasionally, that none of them's in a very positive state?

Anoma: Then you just have to accept that.

S: Ha, Ha. So what do you actually do?

Sona: I think you sort of (Inaudible). (Laughter) You have to do something about it. (Laughter)

Sagaramati: I find if you've got a lot of responsibility you just don't have time to sink. In a way you can experience it (Inaudible) in some ways if you realise you've got a course with five or six (inaudible) that itself is enough to kind of provoke you to change.

Vajradaka: I used to go to the art galleries quite a lot. I used to have three or four pictures that I found, when I could stand in front of them, would create some kind of emotional response. And they would change over a period of a year, but just four, it was like having your own pictures but they were being looked after for you in some way.

Manjuvajra: I always find there's plenty of people around.

Devamitra: Something that I noticed once when I was not feeling particularly good was, I had to go to Blandisford for my weekly prison visit and it was just going into a new situation, just completely different from everything else that I do, and also, seeing people in a really horrible place, this made me much more aware, and those visits never ever became a drag. Actually once my prison visits started, I really started to enjoy them, which was after about three or four months, I've always really enjoyed just about every visit actually.

S: Yeh. I think this going into a new scene or a new situation is quite helpful, especially when you're welcomed and people are glad to see you because it's after an interval. Whereas, you know, people that you see every day don't welcome you. Whereas when you go into a new situation, especially if

you go very far, well there they are at the airport or the railway station, all happy and pleased to see you, and of course that gives you a little bit of a lift, and you feel much more positive and happy. So that is helpful too.

But I think the sort of thing that one mustn't do is say, go and have a drink. I don't think anybody does that now, but this is the sort of thing that people do, isn't it? When feeling dull or flat or bored, people out in the world, so to speak, they go and have a drink. Maybe have two drinks, etc., etc. You know, we all know the story. Also, I must confess, I also have my serious doubts about the utility of things like parties. I think we have to watch things like that too.

Manjuvajra: Parties are OK if you're feeling in a good mood before you go.

S: Right. Yeh. Well, a drink's alright if you're feeling in a good mood; the odd drink, no harm. The harm is when you take the drink because you're feeling dull and flat.

Anyway, I think it's now a drink time! Our innocent drink.

_____ : Who's for tea?

_____ : I don't think there's any 'Camp' left.

S: I'll have tea in that case. (Discussion about allocation of refreshments!)

Mangala: (unclear) you get sort of down....

S: When you get what?

Mangala: Sort of down something...

S: Did you say 'down' or when you get 'dana'?

Mangala: Down.

S: Down - yes. (Laughter)

Mangala: It's like this feeling (Inaudible) recognising that you're perhaps feeling really low or something and try and sort something out. It's quite (Inaudible) there should be that sort of split.

Sagaramati: Your consciousness and your awareness is still there.

S: Um. Yes. It's quite alienated in a way. Yes. Um.

Mangala: I think that's really important isn't it, that actual split in a sense is itself what's wrong.

S: Um. It's as though one hasn't any difficulty maintaining the awareness, but the emotional positivity is difficult to maintain. This is one of the reasons why I say, broadly speaking, that the Metta Bhavana is more important than the Mindfulness of Breathing. It's not all that difficult to maintain continuity of awareness and mindfulness, but it's very difficult to maintain continuity of emotional positiveness. (*Long pause*)

Manjuvajra: Do you think, I mean, I've sometimes just go and shut myself in a room, or go for a walk in the park, and get really sorry for myself, and then get bored with myself, and then, sort of, shake myself out?

S: Yes. Sooner or later one gets to know oneself, and even when you're doing all these things you know how it's going to end, you know it's going to end with you becoming more positive! (Laughter) So you don't bother too much. (Laughter) Even if you're feeling mildly suicidal you don't bother, 'well I know I'll get over it, I've had this experience dozens of times before.(laughter). By the time I get back from my walk I'll be alright, you just know it.

Anoma: It's quite a strange thing that on the retreat recently I was just feeling in a really bad mood, and all the things that the others, sort of come up, you know, things that were coming up and I sort of knew them all so well, but, I mean, I felt them just the same, you know, they were just as strong, in a way, but somehow I just knew them so well that I just thought that they will pass and I just sat with it for three days and it just went. I knew I couldn't kind of resolve it or (Inaudible).

S: Yes. The odd thing is that one can feel them so strongly, at the same time, know so well that they will pass. It's not that you experience them very weakly and therefore you think 'Oh well they're sure to pass.' No, you experience them quite strongly, but at the same time you know that they're not going to last very long.

Ajita: It seems like the humour aspect is important.

S: Um?

Ajita: The humour aspect is important.

S: Human.

Ajita: Yeh - humour.

S: Humour.

Ajita: Yes not to take yourself too serious.

S: Yeh. Not to take yourself too seriously.

Ajita: (Interrupting - inaudible) the Maras.

S: Um. Yeh.

_____ : I remember once, I really was feeling suicidal. I was sitting in my room, really ill; Subhuti came in and said 'You look terrible, what are you doing sitting there?' And I said I was confused and he said 'What are you confused about - which window to jump out of!?' (Laughter) And it was really good. (Laughter)

S: What did you say? Yes, I can't make up my mind! (laughter)

_____ : I just burst into tears. (Laughter) He said, 'I can't stop, I'm busy!'(Laughter)

Anoma: Do you think it takes - it seems to me it's only by, sort of, experiencing those things quite a few times that I've come to that conclusion that in a way those things are going to come up again and I sort of accept that and they will go again. I mean, but before when they come up I'd be completely overwhelmed by them and nearly....

S: You feel that they're never going to leave you and, in a sense, you think that, but subsequently it

feels that they're never going to leave you, but on the other hand you really do know that nonetheless they will leave you. It's a weird, sort of, paradoxical situation, but it enables you to, sort of bear with them much more easily.

Mangala: I often experience I think experience of negativity, kind of a period of kind of withdrawal, as if I kind of withdraw from people, and I don't know if this generally applies to sort of negative states....

S: I think it does, we're depending - yeh?

Mangala: Whereas I usually find - well you say when you talk to somebody it helps but you don't want to talk to anybody in a way!

S: No. Well even if you do talk you can't really put yourself into it.

Mangala: Yeh - right. You just feel very uncomfortable. You can't even communicate.

S: Well I think that's when you withdraw through anger of some kind or another - anger with people. Yeh? You just don't want anything to do with people. So talking to people won't help because the anger, or even the repressed anger won't allow you really to talk to them - you only talk to them in an alienated sort of way.

Anoma: If a Mitra's, sort of, going through something and feeling suicidal and it doesn't seem that there's much point in then saying now you know it will pass, because perhaps they don't.

S: Perhaps they don't want it to pass. Sometimes one can be in that sort of state, - you know, resent the idea that it will pass. You just have to be, sort of, with them as best you can and cheer them up as best you can, depending on how well you know them and what insight you've got into their mentality. It's difficult to lay down any sort of hard and fast rules about it. Some people you can chivvy out of it, some you have to sympathise with a lot before they will agree to come out of it. Some you can just give something to do.

Anoma: It does seem I felt that if I hadn't in the past experienced what it felt like then I wouldn't have come to the conclusion that I had. Just let them be like that.

S: Let them be like that if there's no real danger of them actually committing suicide, - which usually there isn't; - occasionally there might be. (*long pause*)

end of tape three tape four

Vajradaka: I think one of the aspects of the 'morass of the world's illusions' is fear, - fear of change, fear of growing, and sometimes it seems to grip people in little ways, like a horse running at a ditch or a fence, it just sort of stops.

S: I was thinking about this word 'illusions'. Maybe we ought to go into that a bit more and take it a bit more seriously, - 'the morass of the world's illusions', - so what are these 'illusions'? You notice that I'm taking the text now a bit literally, - it doesn't say 'the morass of the world's desires', it says 'the morass of the world's illusions'. So taking that word at its face-value, or taking it literally, well what are these 'illusions', - in what way or in what sense, are the world's illusions a 'morass'?

Mangala: They kind of suck you down, they look very attractive, a little bit like, sort of, quicksand.

S: Yes right.

Mangala: You find that you're caught up in ..

S: Yes. But 'illusions', - what illusions, specifically?

Manjuvajra: Wrong views.

S: Wrong views, - yes, but again that's ...

Mangala: Money? Money and wealth bringing happiness.

S: Ah, - it's the illusion that money or wealth can bring happiness, not money or wealth itself, but the illusion that it can bring you happiness.

Kamalasila: So it's like the illusion that the negative state's going to be here for good.

S: Um, yeh. There are of course four classical illusions, aren't there - the *viparyasas*. One could call those the illusions.

Sagaramati: The intoxications.

S: No, - the so-called topsy-turvy states. That is the 'Seeing the painful as the pleasant', - yeh? 'Seeing the impermanent as the permanent', 'Seeing the selfless as possessing self', and 'Seeing the impure as pure'. Yes? The four *viparyasas*. I've dealt with these in 'The Three Jewels'. So these are, one could say the basic illusions, but even they are, in a way, too general. Um? Do you think there are any specific illusions nowadays current?

Manjuvajra: Well yes.

S: Such as?

Manjuvajra: Marriage, career, wealth.

S: Marriage isn't an illusion, it's (laughter). Marriage is a fact, or at least a possibility. You know, it's a wrong view about marriage, I presume that's what you meant, anyway.

Manjuvajra: Yes, yes.

S: So, you know, what is that illusion about marriage?

Manjuvajra: The illusion is that you can place it at the centre of your life, and if you do so, then your life will be happy and satisfying. If you orientate, say, all your activities towards that particular ...

S: That is, if you make marriage, or, you know, another person ..

Manjuvajra: Or a career.

S: .. as the centre of your existence, or a career, yes.

_____ : Or money.

S: Or money.

Kamalasila: That's seeing the painful as pleasant.

S: Or also the impermanent as permanent. Because you may change though, the other person, the situation, may change. Do you mean - you mention this, as it were, off the cuff, - do you think this is the most serious illusion? At least with the average person.

Manjuvajra: I think the combination of financial security, a family, and a career is a dominant, sort of ...

S: But do you think it is strictly an illusion, or necessarily so? Do you think that there never is an instance of someone being, sort of, happily married, with actual financial security, and genuine job satisfaction? Don't you think that there are people like that around?

_____ : ..gaining Enlightenment.

S: Um?

_____ : Still gaining Enlightenment.

S: Well no, leaving aside the question of Enlightenment, because that would only arise once you had seen that these things were illusions. But don't you think that that is actually possible, in some cases?

_____ : But what about...?

Manjuvajra: No, I don't.

S: You don't. No.

Manjuvajra: I don't think that, you know, I've never met anyone who has struck me as being well satisfied and well... I've never met anyone living that kind of life I would like to swap with.

S: Ah!

Devamitra: But surely, it's like the Devas..

S: Yes, even if it is achieved, it is a bit Deva-like.

Devamitra: It must exist, presumably, - that possibility must ..

S: But even if it exists, it still cannot give any very genuine or lasting satisfaction. But you query, more radically, that it even does exist.

Manjuvajra: Yeh.

S: It might be achieved, perhaps for a few minutes, a few hours, a few days, even a few months, but probably not longer than that. Yeh. And that if one has regarded it as something that is going to continue, at least for this whole life, well then one is radically dis-illusioned when one finds that it doesn't. Or one might feel resentful or blame others, rather than blame the fact that one has entertained what was in fact an illusion. If what you say is true, then it means that the greater part of our present-day social life is based on an illusion, or is an illusion, yeh. People are keeping up, for the most part, a gigantic pretext, yeh. That they're happy, that they're satisfied, that they're secure, when in fact they're not. Would you go so far as to say that?

Manjuvajra: Mmmm (affirming)

S: Well, it is quite radical, isn't it? So, what do you think they should do? I mean, all of them, ideally. What's the solution? For the average man, the man in the street, woman in the street?

Manjuvajra: I think for the average, they're not going to really realise the depth of their dissatisfaction, and they will just continue. I mean, most people will complain, and say well 'that's life', but you've got to sort of stick to that.

S: But then that suggests another illusion they would say which is that that state of affairs is inevitable, that there's no alternative. Yeh? That's an illusion too, or perhaps a delusion, - that that's all you can do, - is pretty unsatisfying ...

Kamalasila: I think they also think it's right. They think it's, sort of, that's how it should be, - something to do with God.

S: But is it simply that it is right because it is in the sense that whatever is is right? Or is it actually that they think that this is how it should be, and that there's something wrong with them for not finding it more satisfactory, which will be another illusion?

Kamalasila: It's a widespread attitude that you can't, there's nothing you can do about it, the conditions, you just have to put up with conditions.

S: Well that is the illusion of fatalism. And also perhaps, not seeing any actual alternative.

Manjuvajra: And also, sometimes those selfsame people will resist any suggestion of an alternative quite strongly.

S: So why do you think that is?

Manjuvajra: Better the devil you know than the possible angel you don't know I suppose.

S: But if you get really desperate, you know, you'll risk the unknown angel, because the worst that could happen would be it turns out to be another devil. But is it that in a perverse, neurotic way, people don't get some actual satisfaction out of the miserable state that they're in?

Mangala: I think they do, - even the most ordinary sort of, middle-class sort of existence, I mean, there is some sort of pleasure in it, you know, I mean, TV and pint of beer, or whatever they're doing, you know.

S: These are not so much pleasures as narcotics.

Mangala: Yeh, exactly ...

S: They numb the pain.

Mangala: In a way that's the danger, that they are kind of insidious like that. It's not actually very unpleasant, if you see what I mean, even while it's not being very satisfying, so they in a way put up with that low level, a sort of dull mediocrity than risk the lot!

_____ : I think also with a numbed person they don't feel any energy within themselves, so they don't feel capable of doing what needs to be done so they shy away from looking at what needs

to be done in order not to feel even less unable to do things, and even less unconfident and so on.

Ajita: I don't think they face up to the fact of change, impermanence. So they their numb-er which suggests that things are ecstatic and predictable, you know. Unpredictable qualities they shy away from.

S: Yes. So what would be your approach, you know, to people of this sort, who are, after all, the majority of our society, and they're presumably the people that we're trying to reach? So what, as it were, should we say, or try to say, to people of that sort, in that sort of situation?

Manjuvajra: I think we sort of try and present our own lives, show them how we live, as positively as possible. I find that just showing someone how I live, sometimes to my surprise, they get amazingly enthusiastic about it.

S: So, I mean, what do you actually say, or what points do you draw attention to?

Mangala: I think you have to show them that there is an alternative, - that if you're not married, well that isn't the end of the world, - there are other ways.

S: Or if you haven't got a regular job.

Mangala: Yes, and you can live very happily in a Community, and you don't need fifty pounds a week to ...spend fifty pounds a week on food. You can get by on three or four, or whatever.

S: Is this what you mean, - or do you mean something more than that?

Manjuvajra: No. I mean things like the kind of 'relationships' you have with people. If I can use that word nowadays.

S: Well, we'll put in the inverted commas when we transcribe it! [*Your wish is my command - transcriber!!*]

Manjuvajra: Thank you! (laughter) [*You're welcome!*] Another thing I think people really get off on is the idea of the communal purse and the sharing of property, the sharing of responsibility, the sort of, - well, when I talk about being a member of a Community, and we're building a house, I say that, you know, 'I'm not only building that, but I'm also building part of a Movement', so it gives me a lot of freedom. I think the adventure of it inspires ..

S: I think that's an important point, because there's no room for adventure, or very little room for adventure, nowadays. And if you can somehow convey that, you know, that you're engaged in some kind of adventure, I think that will spark off quite a lot of people, or at least arouse their interest.

Vajradaka: Even admiration.

S: Because they haven't had anything like an adventure since they went, maybe, to a Boy Scout's scout-camp at the age of ten. (laughter)

Ajita: Because I think that, even though people are bored, they fear that getting into things like the FWBO and Buddhism will be even more boring because they have to give up their kind of values. It seems like it's a dark abyss, you know.

Mangala: But I think also this thing, this adventure is exactly what can turn people off. They don't want to know about adventure because they want something that's safe and secure, and if you

suggested maybe that's a bit.... well I'd rather just stay in my semi-detached and, - no thank you, but if you can show them well look it's quite a viable alternative, it's quite secure in a way, you know.

S: Adventure is secure; adventure is viable.

Mangala: But you know what I mean.

S: Yeh. Well you know what I mean!

Mangala: I know what you mean, as well! (laughter) I think that's probably the way most people would think actually.

Vajradaka: Another alternative, which I haven't actually ever done, but I think that it might be possible, is a kind of 'Mephistopheles and Faust'-like approach. You know, people sort of say 'Well, you know, what I'm doing is the way that I think I can be best happy', and you sort of say 'Well, if you're really happy, well fine, but don't just sort of, if you're not at all, I mean, if you have any kind of inkling that you're not happy, then keep on looking, and don't stop with any one thing, don't abide with any one experience until you really feel that it's going to give you some really permanent kind of experience'. So, sort of trying to encourage a feeling of not just giving up or, - what's the word?

S: 'Hopelessness'. Don't encourage a feeling of hopelessness. But what else has one got to do, except watch the telly in the evening, etc. etc?

Vajradaka: I don't know if it would work actually but I....

S: But do you think we are at present able to present to people concretely, the fact that there is an alternative? Do you think that we're succeeding in doing that?

_____ : No.

Siddhiratna: I think it got a bit confused there. You were saying there's a majority of the people, I understand that to mean that the majority of people are around about 25 or 30, married with at least one or two children, and I think what you and Manjuvakra ended up talking about, - people looking for adventure are usually single, - they may be in relationships but probably not married, and they can float when they want to float. So I think that the majority of people won't want adventure, I think, like Mangala says.

S: No, I was thinking, perhaps, of people who are older, maybe people in their thirties or even forties, who have a sort of spark of adventurousness in them that's never been nourished or has never had the opportunity to find an outlet, and if you, say, present spiritual life or an alternative way of life to them as something adventurous, it could perhaps in some cases elicit a response. That's what I was thinking, actually.

Siddhiratna: I've got a feeling that Manju touched on something that when people come round I think they see there is a positive emotional atmosphere in that their emotions won't be too shook up and that they may transfer from one nuclear situation to an open situation, but then, you know, there'll still be the warmth, that they may or may not have in the other situation.

Sona: I think this thing about adventurousness, actually, that more people aren't put off, people aren't really put off by the idea of adventure, I think it's just the way you put it over to them. I mean, people I work with at the University, - I don't say an awful lot about the Friends, but the opportunity arises and I drop hints and things, and they're sort of always questioning me. Sort of like they can't quite understand how I can just work two or three days a week, and go away for weeks on end and there

they are working five days a week (laughter) ... trying to pay, trying to make ends meet, and, you know, I go in, I'm quite happy and positive and they're always sort of trying to talk to you, join in your adventure in a way, so I sort of feel that they are, that this spark of adventure is there. You can sometimes put it across as though you've got to give up everything, jump in with both feet, you know, then you sort of frighten them away.

S: Um. Um. Let's pursue a little more this question of whether we are managing to project the 'Friends', let's say, using the blanket term, as a sort of viable alternative, - and you think that we aren't doing that?

Siddhiratna: Not yet, no.

Mangala: I think we are to some extent, actually.

Siddhiratna: To some extent is to some extent, but I don't think it's particularly convincing for a very large number of people.

Mangala: Ah no, - I think I agree with that.

Subhuti: I think the problem is that so much is actually in the making, - I mean people can be very excited by that. I think to have a widespread influence there's actually got to be something quite substantial established and running, and reasonably perfected.

Devamitra: I think it's also a question of what we touched on before, the levels within the Movement. The levels at the moment are a bit too stark.

S: What do you mean by 'something', - Subhuti? What do you mean by 'some thing'?

Subhuti: Say - you know, we talk about 'Right Livelihood', which is perhaps one of the most relevant issues of all, to most people. And what have we got? It's pretty insubstantial; it doesn't pay people a living wage, and I think until that's been going for another three or four years we can't, sort of.....

Siddhiratna: Tell them to leave their current job and..

Subhuti: say too much about it. Certainly we can say what we're doing, but we can't expect people to be wildly ...

S: Though we do have the Communities, - they something more achieved and perhaps there are more of them.

Sona: But one of the difficulties is that we don't attract..... Like if we attracted say people in their thirties who have professions and skills and so on, then our businesses would be established much more quickly, and then we could be able to present to them a viable alternative Right Livelihood.

Subhuti: I don't think we're doing anything wrong, I think the direction we're going in is right, and that we are just taking time before we can really start to say that we've got something that's generally attractive. We've got the seeds of something, but it's ...

Siddhiratna: There has to grow up something like, I keep thinking that in about five or six years time, that there ought to be something like a 'Friends' Factory' and that, we ought to get to the level where we're actually dealing with light industry, as it were, which then presents somebody who's got maybe an adventurous kind of nature, or they're interested, at least they can become, start to work

within a situation, which still allows them economically to support their wife and family, and as they get more involved they can even make a transition from a nuclear situation into a community, but I think it has to be that way round for the majority of working-class or even middle-class people.. (inaudible)

S: This is something - just to mention it in passing - something that could be done in, say Norfolk, because apparently there is a policy of encouraging light industries and there is a possibility of some governmental finance for light industries in Norfolk. I mentioned this about three years ago, didn't I, because I saw something in the Paper when I was in Norfolk.

Sona: One of the difficulties I still feel is that unless we can attract people that have gone through a training, that have been established in their career, we're never really going to establish any sort of viable industry. I mean, we talk about establishing light industries, but you need experts to do that.

S: Um. Yes. Well you need entrepreneurs.

Sona: Right. Therefore, if we have a policy of just attracting young people in their early twenties, in a way we put them off having a career and therefore they never become skilled from the beginning (inaudible).

Subhuti: I think that's a matter of actually getting people who do come in at twenty to recognise that they are going to have to go through a training and stick at something.

S: But this happens in the odd case. This happens in the odd case, say in the case of Kularatna, he's definitely thinking of going back to his medical course, in about a year's time.

Subhuti: I mean without actually going back into the world. The whole Right Livelihood situation started very much with people working in a shop, doing things which don't require any skills. I've had a terrible job to get anybody to stick with the press, but gradually that is becoming more firmly established. And as that becomes more firmly established, people who have already got established skills will feel they don't have to, sort of, abandon them and work in a shop in order to be involved in it. I think it's a question of quite a slow build-up.

S: There's also the question of what the individual can do. That you can simply go and say, as an individual, you know, 'Well, look, I'm living in a Community, I'm engaged in Right Livelihood, and I'm much better for it, you could do likewise'. You don't have to have a whole sort of, as it were, institutional set-up. You can just present yourself as an individual who is leading a much more happy and satisfactory life in such-and-such way, for such-and-such reasons. And if you really do seem happy and vital, that will come across to people, they will be impressed.

Manjuvajra: I must say, when we were talking just now about whether we've got anything to offer people, - Siddhiratna said 'No', - and people generally seemed to think that, but when I've actually brought people to see 'Golgonooza' and 'Sukhavati', - delivery-men come to deliver stuff, and people that I work with, they're amazingly impressed by the whole set-up, and one guy, one lorry-driver said to me, as we were walking around 'Sukhavati', he said, 'It's like a dream - it's like a dream come true'. I mean, he's not going to leave his situation and come and live at 'Sukhavati', but I mean ...

S: After all, a dream is just a dream!

Subhuti: I think there is something that is quite impressive to be seen, but it's not as if people can really identify with it, or really think of themselves actually moving into it ...

Siddhiratna: It's as if there needs to be a certain amount of dissatisfaction, you know, for this

adventurous impulse to take place, it has to be, you know, that dissatisfaction has to be felt by that person, that individual, before he can actually even contemplate making reality out of a dream.

Devamitra: But I've come across a number of lorry-drivers, in particular, who have given me lifts, who, you know, are definitely dissatisfied, and definitely concede that you've got something in your life that they haven't.

S: Well perhaps they're a special breed, you know, what makes a lorry-driver a lorry-driver ...

Devamitra: Well this is something we often talk about....

S: And they seem to be people who want to get away from home. (laughter)

Devamitra: Well, they don't like to do a routine job, a lot of them - they like to meet people, - that's why they give lifts. And it gets them out of the house, too. You know, it's like they feel they're halfway, in a sense, between someone who's working in a factory, and sort of doing his head in, and they can see the people who work in factories really do their head in, and sort of someone in a more alternative, radical situation like ourselves. At the same time, they are entrenched, nonetheless, in the domestic situation, and can't sort of extricate themselves.

S: That is simply that they've an unusually long chain! (laughter)

_____ : They have the illusion of freedom.

S: Yes, they have their illusion of freedom.

Subhuti: We've had quite a strange experience with two or three people who've come in to work at Sukhavati recently, - who have been really frightened. There's one electrician in particular, who literally froze the moment he stepped over the doorstep, and he was almost inarticulate with fear.

S: What was he afraid of?

Subhuti: He was afraid of being converted. (laughter) So he had a go. It was really quite an odd sort of experience, and there were another couple of bricklayers who came in, who just told the authorities that the last thing they wanted to do was work there again - they'd rather not work anywhere than there.

S: But they didn't give any reason?

Subhuti: I think the electrician was reported to have said that there was a funny atmosphere. (laughter)

Vajradaka: He did actually come back a bit later on.

Subhuti: He was very guarded though.

Mangala: Do you think it was just their own prejudices?

Subhuti: I think he'd... yes, he'd got an idea, I mean, Kularatna and I had quite a long talk with him, and he was quite up front. Yeh, he definitely had certain conceptions about the way... he thought we were all brainwashed, and that, you know, we explained what meditation was, and he said, 'There you are, - brainwashing!' (laughter) And he just wouldn't sort of budge at all. I wouldn't say he was an unusual sort of person, - he was quite an ordinary working man.

_____ : But he thought you'd sort of take over his world.

Subhuti: Yeh. And he obviously felt this quite strong danger of it.

Mangala: I must say, I'd feel that way if I went to, like Scientology places ...

S: Well maybe he'd been reading about Scientology, or something like that, because they have had quite a bit of publicity of that sort, and they really do seem to brainwash people.

Subhuti: He actually mentioned Scientology and the Hare Krishna. He'd got us under the heading of about three of those sort of groups. It's quite strange that there's obviously quite a section of the population represented by these two or three people, who are going to react quite violently to ...

Siddhiratna: That's only when it's forced on them, or they're forced into it. I mean, he was sort of sent along there ...

S: They presumably think that you're so subtle, you know, insidious, that it inevitably happens, you know, he can't resist if he's actually there.

Well, you remember the Buddha was accused of seducing people with mantras.

Siddhiratna: It's a very rational fear that, isn't it?

S: Well it's an irrational fear, that is.

Subhuti: I've been very struck, actually, with a lot of the people have come, - for business reasons, as it were, with deliveries and so on, just at the prejudice, you know, whether for or against, that they have, the preconceptions they've got about what's going on. It makes me really think we've got quite a difficult job to get through on any scale.

S: I think that the big point is if they see that people are working and living happily, positively. That is the big point for most ordinary people, I think.

What was this point, you know, just to go off the track a bit before we get back to the precepts, - somebody was saying at an Order Day, as reported, I don't know whether rightly or wrongly, about Buddhists not being happy, sometimes, as people outside, - what was all that about?

Siddhiratna: Somebody had said that to me, that they'd seen the Buddhists at Sukhavati and around that area, they felt that they'd always been looking long faced ...

S: Oh! I was really surprised to read that because my impression was always the opposite.

Siddhiratna: Well, it's an impression, so therefore that's her impression, so you could say that's just her prejudice.

Devamitra: I think somebody argued against that, that whenever you see people they brighten up, but I mean, I don't get the impression that people walk around at Sukhavati with long faces.

Siddhiratna: Wait a minute, - it's not me, it's this person. I'm just reporting it. I think also what her experience probably was was that if you're concentrated you probably don't have a big smile on your face.

S: Also if you're working.

Siddhiratna: Yes.

S: You may not necessarily sing as you're working, and you may be tired, if you've been working hard.

Siddhiratna: You may even have a frown on your face with the amount of concentration.

S: Yes. Um. Um. But, I mean, I would say as a result of my own experience and observation over the last few years, - I can't speak so much about 'other', - inverted commas, Buddhist groups in the country, but certainly comparing people that I observe within the Friends with people that I observe outside, there's no comparison at all. People are much happier within the Friends.

_____ : Maybe one misconception in that way is mistaking sort of a polite smile which is very superficial for happy.

S: Yeh. Um. Anyway, back to the Precepts.

Alright, - '5. The holy guru being the guide on the Path, it would be a cause of regret to be separated from him before attaining Enlightenment.'

So what does one mean here by 'separation', - does it mean that you must always be with him? Or what does it mean?

_____ : Sort of alienated from his influence.

S: Ah, alienated from his influence, yes. But it doesn't necessarily exclude physical separation. Um. Um.

Devamitra: This sort of thing's taken quite literally in (inaudible) It's the whole emphasis, I believe, by the Rajneesh people, that they must be with him.

S: Again, what does one mean by 'with', because if you've got several thousand people milling around you, are they really with you? Yeh? Or if you just drive around them in a car, leaning out of the window and blessing them, is that really 'with' them? It raises the same question, doesn't it?

Devamitra: It's the question of physical proximity though - the closer you are to him physically, the greater his influence is likely to be in your case.

S: The Buddha said that 'He who follows the Dharma is in my presence and he who does not follow it, even though he follows after me, holding the edge of my robe, without following the Teaching, is far from me', he said. But that is more the Buddhist view. I mean, personal contact has its own value. One is not denying that. But there can be, as it were, well, physical contact without being any real contact, - one knows that too. And it's better to have real contact without physical contact than physical contact without real contact. So the real togetherness is spiritual.

Devamitra: But it is quite a widespread *miccha-ditthi* in certain spiritual groups, I've come across it quite a bit in friends, well in people coming along to the Centre. One of the things that puts them off, in a sense, or so they say, is that they don't feel there's much chance of having direct contact with you.

Mangala: I think that's really actually very important for people at first. I say at first, it's probably

important all the time. I mean, it's all very well for us to talk when we've got lots of contact with you, for example? I mean people who are never going to even see you, yeh.

Kulamitra: I think that's necessarily true. In my case the second time that I actually talked to Bhante he was ordaining me! (laughter) And, you know, I'd heard a lot about Bhante from Devamitra. But, I mean, I'd only met you once, and I don't call that very real contact.

Siddhiratna: I think also at the E.E.M.C. [Transcriber's note - East End Meditation Centre] I very rarely mention you in person, - I always talk about the FWBO or Sukhavati in particular, or something like that, without ever mentioning the fact that it has a spiritual leader, and then as things develop then they begin to realise that the lectures are given by one particular person, and actually the interest grows, - I don't think it's necessary to mention you by name straight away, because I think then that does make people feel they're not getting their money's worth, as it were, unless they get you.

S: Um. Yeh.

Devamitra: It's not a question of raising Bhante's name, as it were, but, I mean, people do ask well, you know, who's sort of your teacher?

S: Who's in charge of it all, sort of thing?

_____ : No-one's ever asked me...

S: Um. That's quite interesting.

_____ : In all the years...

S: There's also the fact, you know, that it is Buddhism and therefore you've got the Buddha, you know, who sort of overshadows everybody, and there is the Buddha-image in the shrine, that's where it all basically comes from. There is that too, isn't there?

Mangala: Perhaps it also works that, in a sense, you not being around, in a sense adds to your mystique! (laughter) In not being around you become more in a sense revered and it's more of a big deal when you do sort of appear!

S: There is that also, too. But there is also the fact that we haven't encouraged anything like a sort of 'personality cult' in the way that some movements do encourage quite definitely, and we've always put the emphasis on the Spiritual Community, and I think that is also important because you need to be in contact with somebody, but then most Order-members are quite capable of giving that sort of contact to the new person. In any case, it's physically impossible for me to do it. I've got other things to do, you know, for the movement as a whole, which are more useful. Also there is the fact that I mean, people do listen to taped lectures, having contact in that way, and, you know, also the general structure of the FWBO has been more or less laid down by me, so they're in contact with me in a way in being in contact with the FWBO at all, - certainly with the Order, - one could say that.

Vajradaka: I think that happens in the study-groups.

Siddhiratna: Presumably one can go on like that for the rest of the precept, 'separated from him before attaining Enlightenment.'

S: Um. Um. Well, you know, you shouldn't be separated from the influence of those who are spiritually more developed than you, before you no longer need the help of that influence. This is

what it really means, doesn't it? It can apply on every level. Don't be separated from your Kalyana Mitra until you no longer need a Kalyana Mitra, or Kalyana Mitras.

Sagaramati: Doesn't it mean you have to be Stream Entrant (inaudible)

S: Even then, you might need contact with those even more developed than yourself, yes.

Sagaramati: In our case, then it's not going to be somebody we can envisage.

S: No, I suppose not, - not really.

Vajradaka: I think I was misled, a bit, by the Theravada tradition, - a young Bhikkhu lives with his two Kalyana Mitras, for five or ten years, and then he's allowed just to run free.

S: Yes. But, you know, in the Buddha's day, it didn't mean that he had to be in contact with the Buddha himself. You know, two Bhikkhus were, as it were, appointed, and it's on the analogy of that that we have the two Kalyana Mitras.

Vajradaka: The implication was, that after the five or ten years, then he didn't need to have any kind of contact.

S: Well, in the Buddha's day, within five or ten years you usually gained Enlightenment. (laughter) Um? Yes? Um?

Ajita: Do you think it's possible to gain Enlightenment in this day, in one life?

S: Well, - why 'this day'? That's what we were talking about, you know. This day, and this age, Yes? Why not?

Sagaramati: If you look at it. Sometimes (inaudible) could say the Movement, all these people are all meditating and things like that. Sometimes I think that there should be something more happening because of all this ...

S: In a way, they're not doing all that much, - I mean, how many hours meditation a day? And every day? Yes?

Sagaramati: Well yeh.

S: In a few cases, yes. But even so, usually not all that much meditation. No doubt, there will be an effect, you know, even a perceptible effect in the course of years. But it will be a matter of years rather than months. Maybe five years, ten years. And most people are doing other things as well, other necessary things, but not devoting all that much time to meditation itself. When we have the meditation centre at Tyn-y-Ddol, there will be that possibility, yeh, which I think will make quite a big difference to at least some people, and through them to the whole movement. You know, if you have a month, or three months in a predominantly meditative atmosphere and environment, where there isn't any other serious interest or activity, that's going to make quite a big difference. It's going to be a much more effective and influential situation than an ordinary retreat. And also sometimes, since you after all do live with yourself, you don't always realise how much you've changed, or how much is happening, if it isn't dramatic, I mean, if it is just the result of little changes taking place over the days and weeks and months.

Sagaramati: I think that's what I meant. You never... nothing dramatic usually happens. You imagine Insight as being something that comes in a burst, but it never seems to happen.

S: Well sometimes it does. But I think that's relatively unusual.

Vajradaka: It sometimes happens with mitras at Sukhavati, - we've had a few recently.

Sagaramati: Insight.

S: What, - dramatic changes or insights?

Vajradaka: I wouldn't say ... I don't really like to talk about insight but sort of dramatic changes.

S: Um. I certainly see changes in people over a year, or even six months, - maybe all the more so because I don't see people very frequently, usually. And if I see somebody just once or twice or, say, two or three times, in the course of a year, I usually do see quite a definite change in them. Especially perhaps, in the newer people. You know, the biggest changes seem to take place over the period that people are actually getting into the Friends as we say. Yeh? It's really very marked sometimes. You see them after two or three months, in some cases there's a big change, quite evidently, - that's quite remarkable, - though in a way only to be expected.

Devamitra: It seems then that the rate of change seems to decline the more we get into things, or is it because it becomes less obvious, less perceptible?

S: I think both. Because after all the biggest general change in a way is, you know, the change over from a basically materialist orientation to a basically spiritual one. However feeble your spiritual efforts may be, you've made the basic change. Instead of being a conditioned being in search of the conditioned you're now a conditioned being in search of the Unconditioned, yeh? That, in a way is the biggest change of all, that's the biggest step. The first step is the biggest step, and you can actually see people within a space of two or three months, taking that step. It produces all sorts of changes. Perhaps there won't be anything as dramatic as that until they become Stream Entrants, or perhaps until they Go for Refuge, - sometimes it happens then too, - quite a big change takes place in the person.

I must say though, more, a little bit recently I have been wondering, - to get back to the more general point, - whether I shouldn't, as it were, show myself a little bit more. I don't know whether it's worth discussing this a little bit. I was thinking of it partly in connection with Sukhavati and partly in connection with say other places. I do see, for instance, that when I go to Helsinki it does have a very positive effect, so I just acknowledge that quite objectively. I was thinking, well maybe sometimes I ought to say, show myself in, say, places like Cheltenham or places like Cornwall or places like Wales, and just meet some of the people there. Perhaps it would be a good idea, I don't know, I just wondered what other people think. Always, assuming that such things could be fitted in.

_____ : I think it would go down like a bombshell.

S: You think it would?

_____ : Yes. No doubt.

S: Because, I mean, I am more and more busy, but on the other hand I also sometimes feel that I would quite like to do that kind of thing as well. There is also that actually, yes. You know, I was quite accustomed to this in India, but there hasn't perhaps, until very recently in England, been much scope for that sort of thing. But it would seem that there is a little bit now, in, say places like Cheltenham or places like Cornwall. I don't mention the established Centres; I take it for granted that sooner or later I will get around to visiting them. I mean appearing in a more general sort of way.

Manjuvajra: I think it would have lots, I mean, lots of effects. On the people that are already there, it would give them something to work towards, organising the trip and so on.

S: That's true.

Manjuvajra: And then the new people that it would bring out, and also the sort of effect on the people afterwards.

S: This is part of more general thinking, - that the FWBO once Sukhavati is really established as the London Buddhist Centre, is established and functioning, should, as it were, take the offensive much more, - it is part of that sort of thinking, if you see what I mean.

Vajradaka: Just thinking very lightly about it but I think quite a lot of people still relate to someone in robes, you know,...

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S: I might not even wear my robes. But I see what you mean.

Vajradaka: I think there's still the hangover that someone who is in robes is a real Buddhist.

S: I think there is that, as it were, 'hangover', yes, still.

Vajradaka: I was just playing with the idea of, just as a skilful means, a few people being ordained as Anagarikas, just for the purpose of, sort of, providing that pull. I haven't sort of thought about it very much!

S: Well you couldn't just be ordained as an Anagarika, - you'd have to, sort of, live in a certain way. (laughter) Yeh, well if people feel like living in that way, well nothing better.

Siddhiratna: I don't personally feel that it's a particularly good, valid reason for taking on the robe, - just because it has a good effect, - that doesn't sound very positive or helpful.

Mangala: It could be, - a skilful means.

S: No, you're seeing doing it only for that reason, yes, um.

Vajradaka: I didn't think of it only for that reason, but I, you know, obviously it would have to in my mind, be someone who did have that kind of inclination anyway.

S: What you're thinking of is the sort of person who, in any case, would be leading that life. It might be a skilful thing for him, in addition, to actually wear a robe, - yeh?

_____ : Well, yeh.

S: Whereas at present we're not thinking in terms of robes, even if someone is actually leading that sort of life, which some people are.

But anyway, more generally, I really do foresee that once the London Buddhist Centre at Sukhavati gets under way, there's going to be quite an explosion of FWBO - not just activities, - but influence quite widely. And therefore I just sort of wonder whether it would be appropriate for me to play at least some part in that, by appearing in person a little more frequently, - not necessarily even under

FWBO auspices, but wherever there are interested people, and friends and sympathizers. I had avoided this, quite deliberately, at the very beginning, for two reasons, - one, on account of the circumstances of, some of the circumstances under which the FWBO was started, and, two, because I was putting all my energy into the Movement itself, and classes and courses, and later on writing and so on. But perhaps the time has come for for some change.

Siddhiratna: So you're not planning a sort of lecture tour or something like that, - just to arrive at somewhere...

S: No, I've no definite ideas, - in fact I'm open to suggestions. It had even occurred to me, - this only crossed my mind - that well next year or perhaps the year after I'll have a lecture-tour, and perhaps there will be, you know, lectures in different parts of the country because if I get into it I'd rather do it all at one fell swoop and spend two or three months, rather than keep on interrupting other work with the odd lecture, - say set aside two months, three months when I have a tour and every Centre arranges a few lectures or arranges, either under their own auspices or some local hall, or even other groups that are interested while I'm in that area, can invite, and it's all sort of sorted out beforehand, you know, from the London Buddhist Centre, and maybe I give a couple of dozen lectures in different places, just having a quick tour around and contact people, because I think it's good to do things, as it were, in instalments like that, rather than change from one thing to another. You know, spend say a few months only writing, say or a few months only in London, sort of dealing with the situation there, or a few months, say, out on tour, or a few months away in Tyn-y-Ddol, rather than a day or two of this and a few days of that and the odd day of something else, - do you see what I mean?

So yes, a lecture-tour even is a possibility, maybe starting off at Brighton and working my way gradually up to Glasgow and Edinburgh. I think we probably need to put ourselves a little more on the map, as I said take the offensive and be going outwards quite a lot. I mean, after a period of concentrating all of, or a big percentage of our resources at Sukhavati, and putting energy into that, now we have to start radiating out.

Sona: I wonder if chairmen ought to be thinking in future of a similar sort of thing, going out...

S: Well those who can, those who have the time. If you're backed up by three or four other Order members you can, but if you're taking nearly all the classes you just can't, obviously. But yes, Chairmen and secretaries should be thinking in those terms if they possibly can, if they have the backing of a team of Order members at the Centres, as sooner or later they should all have.

Vajradaka: So it goes back to the idea of those people who are into speaking, having a selection of talks, and go round a talk which is appropriate for the Friends, a talk which is appropriate for Mitras, and ...

S: Their speciality.

Devamitra: While we're on the subject actually something I should have raised yesterday but I forgot was I did receive a letter recently from the Northampton Buddhism Group requesting contact with the FWBO. Buddhadasa and I...

S: Good. Northampton. I went there every month for years, you know, but the personnel have changed. They used to meet in someone's sitting-room. But there were some quite good people there.

Devamitra: There was only three or four of them actually.

S: Well, there used to be, usually a dozen or so when I went there. But anyway, go by all means I'd

say, yes. There'd be probably a few more people than usual to meet you.

I gave quite a good talk, I mean in the sense that it met with a good response, at the local Spiritualist Church. The woman who was the Minister of that used to come to the Buddhist group, and they had a quite nice, really bright, colourful Spiritualist Church, - it's not at all like the usual picture one has of a Spiritualist Church, and they had about a hundred people there, to hear a lecture on Buddhist meditation. So there are those sort of contacts and possibilities there. I mean, the Church, they didn't have any sort of services but they seemed to be using it just for lectures, and they had their seances which were for the actual members that weren't very numerous, somewhere else, I think in an adjoining building, - the Church was just like a really brightly, gaily painted lecture-hall with a sort of shrine at the far end, and they just used to have talks and I gave one of these talks, - there was a very good response from people, - far more people than ever came to the Buddhist Society, but they were quite interested in Buddhist meditation, and this woman who ran the Church, she was really very friendly and quite interested.

So, I say, go by all means if you can fit it into your programme.

I don't want to underestimate the importance of personal contact, but this can take place on a number of different levels, - I think everybody who comes into the FWBO really does need personal contact, but it should be with Order members, and especially with his own, or her own, Kalyana Mitras, eventually. It's quite literally impossible for me to have very close contact with even the people that we have at present.

Subhuti: What about Order members in the outlying places, - I mean, say, Lokamitra in India, and others also in Finland and New Zealand? What about the question of contact in those cases.

S: With whom?

Subhuti: Well, with yourself and with other Order-members.

S: Well as regards Finland, I've had now four visits there, and some of them do come over here. New Zealand, unfortunately, I haven't been able to go for four years, which is quite unfortunate really, but it just wasn't possible. Some of them of course, have been here, which is good. I think it has to be a two-way process, even if I am sometimes able to go to the other places, they need to make an effort to come here. I mean not only to meet me, but because there is more going on in England and especially in London, and it would be good for them to have personal experience of that. There is a bit of resistance here and there, mainly with a few people in New Zealand, to that sort of thing, but I think that will eventually be resolved.

In some ways it would be more useful for people to come over to England and have an extensive contact with the Movement here, than just for me to go to their particular country, and just have a brief contact simply with me.

Subhuti: I just have the feeling sometimes - not talking specifically of contact with you but of contact more generally with the Movement - that some Order members have gone out of contact in order to do a job, in order to work in a Centre, but they've definitely suffered from that, that they haven't had.. that they seem to have slipped back where everybody else has moved on, or because of the contact that is going on. I wondered if there was anything that...

S: I think that is avoidable, I think in at least one or two cases, it's almost as though they slipped back because they didn't want to move forward. That they did in fact have the opportunity of moving forward even though they didn't come to England perhaps, or have contact with me, but they could

actually have moved forward more than they did, in my opinion.

Subhuti: I was thinking particularly of ***** [name removed by transcriber (Silabhadra) - as the person mentioned is now back in contact] and I think it warrants a bit of discussion. I definitely feel that he's quite badly out of contact, and, that it's not either particularly good for Finland or for him, his family situation. There's some, well, yeh, danger of him drifting away in time, or at least not keeping up his present contact.

S: Well, if you genuinely think that, then you ought to put it to him and suggest he comes back.

Subhuti: I was thinking of doing that, but I think first of all we've got to consider is Finland, what happens there.

S: Well I know Vajrabodhi has for some time been of the opinion that ***** should move out of the Centre and take a flat by himself, which means that at least in Vajrabodhi's opinion *****'s presence at the Centre, living there, he's not indispensable. But he is of course taking quite a few of the classes, because, I mean, the other people are all working. But on the other hand, if his being there is going to result in him getting more out of contact, well, he shouldn't be there, because his being there, in the long run, wouldn't really be to any great purpose. And a lot has happened, of course, since ***** left England.

Mangala: I mean also I wonder to what extent we can sort of keep in (unclear) contact apart from *****.

S: It does vary, - I think some are much more in contact than others. Also, I think we have to accept that where there are just a few Order members in a relatively small FWBO it's going to lag behind the rest of the Movement to some extent. We can't expect it to be completely abreast, any more than you can expect the child to be abreast of the parents. It will grow up sooner or later, we hope, but they're pioneering there just as we had to pioneer here, and in a sense of course we're still pioneering. So we can't expect smaller and more newly planted sort of branches of the Movement in other countries to be keeping fully abreast of developments in England, which is after all the spearhead. That all we can expect is that they are growing, which is certainly the case in Finland, there's no doubt about that, - some individual Order members more than others, - some are perhaps only four years behind the FWBO in England, whereas others are six years behind. But on the whole, things are growing there, likewise in New Zealand. But if you feel like that about ***** , then I suggest you should write, quite frankly, to him and to the other Order members there.

Subhuti: I was thinking particularly from the point of view of somebody else going out there.

S: But are we able to send anybody else out there? You see, Ratnapani is out there and is in touch, but it's not yet quite clear what he and Mahendra will be doing. But he seems to be... well he is, judging by his letters, in a very bright and positive mood indeed.

Siddhiratna: It's almost as though that's part of the circuit isn't it. There's Jinamata's flat in Berlin and there's a flat at the Centre (unclear) circuit on the Continent.

S: Jinamata seems to be coping quite well on her own, at least as regards her sort of general positivity and solidity, as it were.

_____ : Aryavamsa does too.

S: I think Aryavamsa does, - yes, that's really remarkable.

_____ : Perhaps he really doesn't need any of them, maybe in a way because ***** is there doing all the work it's sort of stopping people doing things which they otherwise have to do.

S: It's going to be quite difficult because Vajrabodhi has virtually two jobs now, and has worked so hard for so many years. Gunavati has a full-time job and two sons, not very young, to look after, and difficulties at home, and can't really come too frequently because of these difficulties. Gunavati has also a full-time job, but does all that she can, comes along as often as she can, and very positive. Sarvamitra is still a student. Bodhisri is more or less out of things at the moment, for personal reasons. So they are just about managing to keep the classes going, and more and more people are coming than ever, and classes are better than ever it seems.

Oh, Maitreya, I forgot to mention Maitreya. He doesn't have any full-time job, he's partly supported by his parents, and he composes music and paints pictures - he's the artistic type whom it's very difficult to organise. He's certainly helps out quite a lot and he's a very positive influence, but I don't think he can really do very much more than he's doing at the moment. You can't organise the artists, you know that.

Sona: I have the impression from the time I've spent with ***** in Sweden that a visit to England would certainly benefit him a lot, and he could do a lot more in Finland than maybe he is doing. I sort of feel at the moment probably for another year it wouldn't matter too much for him to stay there. I think he can work with people quite well. Maybe he hasn't got the sort of necessary sort of sparkle and enthusiasm that he could have.

S: Vajrabodhi does say that in his opinion he has succeeded better than the other two Order members who've been there, which is not any reflection on either Buddhadasa or Vajradaka - in a way he regards them as, say, more highly qualified, but he sort of acknowledges that ***** , somehow or other, seems to have got on more smoothly with everybody, and maybe pleased more people more of the time, if you see what I mean. So he's certainly functioning well in that sort of way.

Anoma: One of the things Finnish mitras said to me that she felt ***** had less English in him, and (inaudible) adapted (unclear) better than Buddhadasa and Vajradaka.

S: Of course he's the most English one of the lot! Actually. Technically let's say. Yes, he seems to have settled in more perhaps. But then again, the situation has changed since Vajradaka was there and since Buddhadasa was there. It's a situation perhaps into which it's more easy to settle down.

Sona: The danger it seems is to let someone settle into a situation like that for too long, to settle down ...

S: Well perhaps it would be best to just point out the danger to ***** quite frankly and say that he didn't think in terms of staying there longer than say six or eight months, or something like that, and that he needed to renew himself by an extended contact, and that he really felt that, and should bear that in mind, - that they should all bear that in mind. The way that he's been talking, I mean, it seems that he was thinking of a quite indefinite stay there. But I also got the feeling that wherever he does go or settle, he tends to dig himself in, and this was the sort of general thing with him, not just relating to Finland I think. A need to feel 'at home' and to make himself 'at home'. But by all means you tell him frankly what you think, I think that is best. We can't decide for him, he has to decide himself, but others can certainly point out what they see in a situation.

Alright then, time for one more precept.

'6. Religious faith and vows being the vessel which conveyeth one to Emancipation, it would be a cause of regret were they to be shattered by the force of uncontrolled passions.'

Alright, what are these 'religious faith and vows', - how are they 'the vessel which conveyeth one to Emancipation', and how are they shattered, or how is the vessel 'shattered by the force of uncontrolled passions'? 'Religious faith and vows'. You know, what do you think is meant by that?

Devamitra: Refuges and precepts.

S: Yes, one could say the Refuges and Precepts. But vows. Isn't the vow, taking it literally, quite a strong term?

Anoma: Commitment.

S: It's commitment. It means one's commitment, really, which of course is based upon faith and expresses itself in the form of vows. That is to say 'I will do this, I will definitely do this, I undertake to do it, I promise to do it, I commit myself to doing it.' So it's commitment, in that sort of way, which is the 'vessel which conveys one to Emancipation', to Enlightenment. Now what does that mean? It's saying 'No Enlightenment without commitment', but why is that, how is that? I mean, what therefore is commitment, what does that involve?

Mangala: Otherwise you give up. If you don't really commit yourself you ...

S: Yes. Commitment really means the sort of integration, the unification of all one's energies, all one's interests, and the directing of them in one direction, orienting of them in one direction. That's what commitment, and that is expressed in the form of the vows. You can take the precepts, the ten precepts, as being vows, or one can think in terms of other vows that one makes from time to time.

Kamalasila: If you commit yourself to something, sooner or later it actually happens.

S: Sooner or later it actually happens, despite all obstacles and difficulties, yes. So, you could say that, to develop the theme or the image, the commitment, the religious faith and the vows, are a vessel, a boat, yes? And the boat carries you across the ocean. So what usually happens, here we are on this shore, with a bit of wood lying here and a bit of wood lying there and an old sail, you know, somewhere else all scattered. All the items are there, but they're not going to help you cross the ocean in that state, - you must put them all together, you must knock them all together, you must build a ship, something integrated, tight, exclusive in a way, keeping out the water, and you will get in it and then you can sail across, and then you've some chance of reaching the further shore; but not if you remain simply surrounded by all the bits and pieces on this shore. So the commitment represents the putting together of all these things into the shape of the boat. That is to say, your ordered spiritual life, your committed spiritual life.

_____ : Regular steps.

S: Um?

_____ : Regular steps.

S: Yes, regular steps also. And then supposing you're sailing in your boat or your ship to the opposite shore, and there comes a great wave and smashes against the side of the boat, and the whole thing falls to pieces. Well will you get to the other shore? No, you'll drown, you'll sink, or at least you'll be swimming for a while, maybe you clamber back to the hither shore, - so what is this wave? It's 'the force of uncontrolled passions'. Yeh? So, what it really means, that having once made your commitment and expressed that in the form of vows, if you allow the force of uncontrolled passions to shatter the commitment and the vows, then your whole spiritual life will be stultified. You won't

develop, you won't grow. There won't be any spiritual life any more. You see the situation, you see the picture?

So what does this mean? It means you must think very carefully, you must put, you know, your ship together very mindfully, strongly. If you make a vow, really make it so that it's absolutely unbreakable.

Mangala: In a way it could be instead of doing that somehow getting those things behind you rather than ...

S: Well, you can develop that. There's not only a wave, smashing against it, there's a leak. Yeh? There's a wind which is too strong for your tiny sail. The mast may snap.

Mangala: What I meant though was perhaps there's a way of utilising that energy of the passions, rather just building something that would stand ...

S: Well it couldn't be a paddle-steamer. Well that's, you know, it's uncontrolled passion, you see. It doesn't say 'passions', it says 'uncontrolled passions'. Yes? I don't know whether that's really in the text, or that's a sort of gloss; but it's true, yeh?

Siddhiratna: It means uncontrollable passions.

S: Uncontrollable, yes. But how does one come to have uncontrollable passions?

_____ : Through being bored.

S: If you have uncontrollable passions you can't make a commitment, can you?

Siddhiratna: You probably, you could, as in the conventional, make the initial Going for Refuge, which isn't quite Going for Refuge, in a way with an intellectual Going for Refuge.

S: Yes. Which to some extent it always is, to begin with.

Siddhiratna: That will still mean that there are uncontrollable passions there.

S: It means that there's some energy which has not been included in your Going for Refuge, in your commitment, and which is even directly opposed to it. So what sort of thing would that be? Can you give any example or instance?

_____ : Quite a lot of things.

S: Quite a lot of things.

Sagaramati: Hatred.

S: Hatred.

Vajradaka: Resentment.

S: Resentment. Yes. And actually acting upon it.

Siddhiratna: Would ambition be anything like that?

S: Ambition, yeh?

_____ : Lacking in confidence.

S: Lacking in confidence. That's more like springing a leak, isn't it?

Siddhiratna: Thinking about that ambition, I should have thought it could be a positive factor in the sense of ambition to be Enlightened, as it were. To get to the hither shore.

S: Um. Yes. But it can also have an ordinary worldly meaning. Especially within an organisational context. You could just be ambitious, have a bigger and better Centre than anybody else, so that there could be you at the head of it, as it were. In that way your spiritual energies could get diverted into ambitions.

Vajradaka: Just taking the word 'passion', - I mean, it has two meanings. It can be taken in two ways - to have a 'passion', it can be to have your emotions flowing, - or it can be 'passion' in the sense of a sort of *klesa*.

S: Yeh. Or something disruptive, you know, like the wave breaking against the side of the boat.

Vajradaka: Sometimes there's quite a strong danger that people sort of stultifying their passions, their emotions.

S: Well, there's two extremes, You don't want to stultify it, but you don't want it to run wild either. You have to use it, to control, - not even control in a repressive sort of way, but an easy, natural sort of control which might be quite difficult at first. At first you may just have to suppress, for a while.

Siddhiratna: I thought that the passions always a negative quality. I remember in one of the lectures you actually state that - the *Maha* - the Dhyani Mandala....

S: Are you thinking of *Raga* and *Maharaga*.

Siddhiratna: Yes. I think ...

S: Well, '*Raga*' or 'passion' is positive to the extent that, at least, it's able to be positive, you can use it positively, or the energy that is in it. But the general idea about the religious or spiritual person is that they're rather energy-less, rather attenuated, rather anaemic. So then what does that mean? Like, you know William Arkle's painting, 'the offending poster'. Um? I mean, bloodless, bodiless.

Sagaramati: What sort of passions could you ...?

S: I'm not thinking of passions in the plural so much as passion in the sense of, well, the intensity of energy, energy just flowing. Um? So that one is really alive, and is felt by others to be alive, - not half alive.

Vajradaka: I mean, I wonder just how much, what John MacMurray says in his '*Reason and Emotion*', - you can make your emotions reasonable, sort of, make them sort of rational in a sense, sort of objective, sort of just by your thinking about it.

S: I Think it helps. I wouldn't say it was so easy as that seems to suggest.

But you see, the author of the Precepts attaches great importance to not breaking vows. You can see why - because if a vow represents the sort of crystallisation of a commitment, and that means the

intensification through the integration of all one's energies upon the chosen goal, then the breaking of the vow means the relaxation of the commitment and the scattering of those energies.

I mean, we do know, when there have been one or two cases, unfortunately, of people breaking vows. I think in one case, someone's vow to give up smoking cigarettes, and it certainly didn't have a very happy effect on that person, breaking of his vow.

[Long pause]

Mangala: In a sense, I suppose, the strength of the vows is determined by the extent to which you are integrated.

S: Yes, right. Yes. Yes. Ideally it's the expression of that integration.

Mangala: Somebody might make a vow and sometimes you might not be all that surprised that they broke it in two weeks.

S: Well, they hadn't really made the vow.

Mangala: Perhaps only to the extent to which they are able.

S: Yeh. So people should make a vow only to the extent that they're able to keep it. Though, paradoxically, if you make it, it helps you to keep it. But this is where, maybe the Kalyana Mitras come in. They don't allow someone to make a vow which as far as you can see they're inevitably going to break. Then start off with a week, or two weeks, or three weeks, you know, whatever the appropriate period may seem to be. And give them every possible support in observing it. You know, if they've taken a vow to give up smoking cigarettes, well see that cigarettes are kept well out of their way, and visitors aren't encouraged to smoke, and things like that.

[Long pause]

Mangala: Precepts aren't vows, are they as such. They're not very specific in that way.

S: They aren't really. They're more like, as I've said, principles than vows, and that the vow is specific and concrete by its very nature. For instance, the First Precept: undertaking from injuring living beings. That is very broad, that's a principle, but a vow might be that 'I give up eating meat', or 'I give up wearing leather articles'. That would be a vow, because it's specific and concrete, and you're either observing it or not observing it. There could be an argument or dispute as to whether you were injuring living beings in a general way, but there couldn't be an argument or dispute as to whether you were eating meat or not eating it, or making use of leather articles or not making use of them. So a vow suggests something very specific and concrete, which you're definitely either observing or not observing, and there's no intermediate positions.

Sagaramati: A principle is something that's felt and depending on how you feel it depends on how you express it.

S: Yes. And you take vows to strengthen you in the observance of the principle, so the principle isn't just a beautiful ideal in your own mind, but is actually working itself out in practice.

Mangala: I suppose the more spiritually mature one becomes, perhaps the more important vows will become, the more specific will be the ways in which, you know ...

S: Yes. Also, paradoxically again, the less you need vows, the more you have such a feeling for the

principle that you carry it out in every situation and don't need the guidance and support of actual vows, but you certainly need them at the beginning.

For instance, take the fifth precept - of the Five Precepts, that is - to abstain from intoxicants. Well, that's a good principle, no-one wants to have their mindfulness or awareness clouded, but then you might find that taking alcohol does, so you could take a vow 'Well I'll abstain from alcohol', or you may take a vow, 'Well I won't have more than one pint of beer at any one time', you know, that would also be a vow, yeh? Or more than two, or more than eight for that matter. (laughter) That will still be a vow, because you're definitely limiting and restricting. One pint might be your limit, or eight might be your limit.

Manjuvajra: Do you think it would it be a good idea to wear a sort of vow cord or something? (laughter) Just around your wrist! As...sort of.

S: Well, not smoking? So people don't offer you cigarettes.

Manjuvajra: Yes, well so that it makes the whole taking of vow much more serious and you sort of.. because I've got the feeling that vow-taking could just be taken fairly casually, and yet I think the usefulness of it is ...

S: What are the vows that people most generally take nowadays? One I know is smoking. Another I know is celibacy, for a longer or shorter period. Any others?

Vajradaka: To do practices.

S: To do practices - that's good, yes. What about speech vows?

Vajradaka: Giving of Dana.

S: Giving of Dana vows. So do you think your idea is applicable to all of these?

Manjuvajra: I think it would really, you know, just be something to make the people that have taken the vow realise it all the time.

S: You mean just, say, the same cord, regardless of what the vow was, or a specific cord for a specific vow?

Vajradaka: Different colours.

Manjuvajra: Different colours - I don't know.

Siddhiratna: A bit like tying a knot around your finger isn't it. You keep it in mind anyway.

S: I think it generally is known, isn't it, within the Order at least, that someone has taken a vow?

_____ : I don't ...

S: No?

Vajradaka: Within the Chapter.

S: Within the Chapter. Because it's usually taken, as it were, publicly, isn't it, within the Chapter. I usually get to know about it sooner or later, though not always I think.

Siddhiratna: I remember once on a Haslemere retreat Kevin Brooks made a badge which said 'observing silence'.

S: Yes, I remember that. He not only made it, he wrote it inside his wrist, didn't he, observing silence, and someone would go up to him and say, 'Hi Kevin, having a nice time on the retreat?' and he'd give them a surly look and hold up his wrist. (laughter) And they'd feel rather foolish, and walk away. (laughter) He did this with quite a lot of people.

Siddhiratna: A little with 'No Smoking' on it.

S: Yes, 'No smoking' badge is quite good for people observing, you know, vows of that ...

Siddhiratna: I think it can be quite bad for people who have taken a vow and then somebody comes in with a cigarette that doesn't know it ...

S: Yes. Somebody did raise the point, say, you know, in relation to the celibacy vow, that supposing an Order member who was married went to some distant Centre where it wasn't known that he was married, he could, if he wore a wedding-ring, because that would show to at least the ladies at that particular Centre, that he wasn't available, he was a married man. Yes? Um? Otherwise they might be in some doubt or ambiguity, and wonder what attitude towards him to adopt.

Mangala: Wear a ring saying 'I'm just interested in sex', or something like that.

S: Well I think that is taken for granted. You just wear the ring to indicate that you're not. (laughter)

Kamalasila: I suppose you could say that shouldn't really be necessary nowadays.

S: Um? What?

Kamalasila: Well that you shouldn't have to ward people off.

S: I don't know. If you're an exceptionally attractive person and you want to observe celibacy, it might be necessary to give people some indication and, in fact, warn them off.

_____ : Right, if you were celibate....

S: You could maybe just wear a plain white button or badge. Something like that.

S: No sex please, I'm celibate! (laughter)

S: No, just a white badge. I think the sort of badges that people sometimes wear in that sort of way might be regarded as just provocative. Yeh? You see what I mean? It will be a form of sexual teasing, which wouldn't be very desirable. It has been observed, I mean, you know, we went go into this in any great detail - it has been observed that some people after taking vows of celibacy become slightly more flirtatious! So, you know, one must also watch that.

But anyway, you know, regarding vows generally, I think the practice of taking vows should be very much encouraged, because it does make the observance of the principles as represented by the Precepts much more concrete and much more specific, and one is much more likely to apply them then.

Siddhiratna: Apply the Precepts?

S: Yeh. Otherwise you say, 'Not to injure living beings', well you might just be unaware that you're injuring living beings unless you start thinking about specific instances. Well, do I injure living beings by doing such and such?

Devamitra: I think there was a point that you made on the Convention, two years ago, talking about vows which wasn't recorded in the Convention report which I've not heard generally discussed and that is, I think you said that it's a good idea to take a vow to abstain from something, also to make a positive vow at the same time.

S: That's true.

Devamitra: (Inaudible) rather than just get the impression that taking vows is a sort of very repressive or denying sort of thing.

S: Very often it is, of course. So what would be the positive counterpart of giving up smoking?

Siddhiratna: Buying flowers.

_____ : Eating chocolates. (Laughter)

S: Eating apples!

Siddhiratna: It would be something like, maybe buying flowers for the shrine which bring a good fragrance.

S: Yes, quite. Using the money that you would have spent on cigarettes in that way.

Devamitra: But maybe that idea should be made more known

End of tape four tape five

Devamitra: But maybe that idea should be made more known, because

S: Yes, I certainly haven't mentioned it since.

Devamitra: I've mentioned it to Lokamitra who hadn't heard about it. I think even one or two Order members were unaware that you'd said it actually, even people who were there at the time.

S: And what would be the positive counterpart of a vow of celibacy?

Vajradaka: When I last took one, I did it in terms of contentment.

S: Well contentment, and also one might say, treating members of the opposite sex as individuals - one could take a vow to that effect, which would be positive. *[Pause]* But it's as though the principles are like the blueprint of the ship, but taking the vows is like actually building the ship. Yeh. Um?

Siddhiratna: I always get the feeling, Bhante, I've never taken a vow for anything. I've never actually felt the need to. I mean, most of the Precepts, when I've consciously been trying to practise them, which, you know, I do make an effort with, somehow I always sort of see a vow as a.. if you're particularly weak in one particular area you need bucking up and take a vow because it maybe of help to you, but personally I don't seem to think vows are absolutely necessary, excepting in those

areas where one feels one is exceptionally weak.

S: So are you saying that you don't have any area in which you are exceptionally weak or....?

Siddhiratna: I'm saying that I manage to keep the Precepts as far as I think it's possible to keep the Precepts without needing to resort to a vow, as it were. I'm not sure whether that's a wrong view or a rather negative view of what vows are.

Sagaramati: It could be used for something like smoking. You could say that doesn't really come in the area of the Precepts. I've never felt.... I took a vow because I wanted to give it up, and I feel it's really helpful to make that decision and make it consciously to other people, and it does, it works.

Siddhiratna: But I don't actually want to give up smoking.

Sagaramati: Yeh, well fair enough. But I mean, if you wanted to, then it's a good way of, sort of, making it much more effective. I found I gave up for a year, I vowed for a year, but after about three months after a year had finished I started smoking again, so I took another vow.

Mangala: I mean, I'm sure if we all sort of sat down and thought about it. We probably don't have to think for too long. There are always at least a few ways in which we could all tighten up our lives a bit, make them a bit more consciously goal-orientated, and we just do a few specific things which we know quite definitely would help us. I think I remember you saying once that in a way our whole life should be a series of vows, in the sense of almost everything we do.

S: And of course they can change. You can take different vows for different periods. You might need, you know, special support of one kind at one period of your life and of another kind at another period. When you're young you might need the supportive vows of celibacy, but when you get older you might not need them at all.

Mangala: I'm a bit surprised there aren't more vows.

S: Yes, in a way, yes.

Mangala: I haven't taken any myself actually!

S: Perhaps one should think more in terms of positive vows. Say, an Order Member could take a vow that he'll give at least four public lectures in a year. During the next year, give four, at least four public lectures, outside the scope of the FWBO - things like that.

Siddhiratna: I think that's probably it isn't it. It's like Devamitra was saying, the act of denial is a kind of negative aspiration, as it were, but to actually to take a positive vows seems to be more useful.

S: Well, for instance, it's almost like some Centres have sort of almost taken collective vows that they'll raise £1,000 for Tyn-y-Dol. That's a vow, you could say. Yeh? Um? I mean, individuals can do that - 'I will raise £100 for Pune' - take a sort of vow, state it publicly, and give yourself a reasonable period to do that, with the determination 'I'm absolutely going to raise that £100 in a year. If I haven't got it at the end of a year I'll sell my record player and I'll sell my clothes and I won't go on holiday, but I'll raise that £100. That can be your vow.

Or a vow, for instance, to, say, buy and distribute so many copies of Buddhist publications. There are all sorts of possibilities.

Siddhiratna: Or to supply the flowers in the Shrine.

S: Right. Yeh. I mean, some people take vows that each morning the first person that you meet, you'll give a bright smile to and say 'Hello'. (Laughter) Every single morning, whoever it is that you see first, wherever you are.

Siddhiratna: If you've got a vow of celibacy.... (Laughter).

S: Well, you know, with all the practice you get you should be able to say it in such a way that there'll be no misunderstanding.

Sagaramati: Is there a difference between celibacy and chastity? Somebody brought this up the other day.

S: Ah. In English usage there is. (Laughter) Quite definitely. I mean, just taking English usage, leaving aside how those words are used from a Buddhist content - celibacy means the single state, the state of bachelorhood - that you are not married, you have no legal marriage tie, irrespective of your sexual behaviour. Strictly, this is what celibacy means - it comes from a Latin word meaning a column or pillar which stands alone. Chastity means the state of not having any sexual relations at all.

Manjuvajra: Ever? Or in the future?

S: Pardon? Well, within the relevant period. If you say, of someone who is dead, that he led a chaste life throughout the whole of his life, it would mean then that he hadn't had any sexual relations in his whole lifetime. Or if you said that I lived a life of chastity for a year, it would mean that you didn't have any sexual experience for a whole year. But in English celibacy and chastity do not mean the same thing, though we often use celibacy loosely to mean chastity - that is not really correct.

Mangala: single state?

S: Celibacy is the state of being single - legally single, without any legal marriage ties, and with your own independent establishment. That is the state of celibacy. You know, a bachelor life.

Subhuti: Abhaya raised this the other day, reading the pamphlet on 'Buddhism and Morality'. Apparently you say in that, that you describe the Third Precept as contentment with either the marital or the celibate state.

S: Yes. Because *Kamesu Micchachara* has to cover both the married and the unmarried.

Subhuti: Yes, so when you say celibate in that context do you mean... are you using it in the strict.....?

S: No, I used it in the sense of chastity - Yeh?

Subhuti: So, that say *Kamesu Micchachara* means if you're married that you're content with sexual relations that you're having there.

S: Well, if you explain it fully, you're content with the state of marriage, or celibacy, or chastity - if the emphasis is on contentment - Yeh? Do you see what I mean? That you can be celibate and not content with it, or content with it. You can be chaste and content with it, or not content, married, content or not content. The contentment, if you take contentment as the positive counterpart of that Precept, is the keynote, Yeh? Um?

Vajradaka: So in that sense celibacy becomes the middle....

S: In a way it's a middle point, yes.

Subhuti: The way in which you read, it didn't.... You understood it in a way that most people seemed to understand it. It seemed to mean that either you were married, or you were chaste.

S: Yes. Yes. In other words the third possibility, celibacy, was not specifically mentioned.

Subhuti: Well it wouldn't be understood, generally.

S: That's probably because I was writing for a Catholic journal where they naturally wouldn't envisage that third possibility.....

(break in the tape)

S: that chastity has got the wrong sort of connotation. You know, it's almost sort of, almost comic, almost comic. It's hardly regarded as a virtue.

Sagaramati: What was that you said about Anagarikas?

S: Well, strictly speaking one should speak of Anagarikas as taking a vow of chastity rather than a vow of celibacy. You could say that most men Order Members are celibate but not chaste. That would be, you know, a strictly correct statement. I mean, formally correct at least. Really there are these three possibilities - of celibacy, chastity, and the married state - I mean, the faithful married state, so to speak.

Siddhiratna: Sorry but I've got confused now. What's the point of celibacy? What's the function of celibacy? Why be celibate, or what does being celibate mean? I mean if you're chaste it means no sexual relationships, if you're married it means sexual relationship with only one person.....

S: Being celibate means that you have no legal marriage ties, and you live alone. You have a separate establishment, you do not have a joint establishment with a person of the opposite sex to whom you are married.

Siddhiratna: So does that mean that you are not necessarily chaste?

S: But you're not necessarily chaste.

Siddhiratna: You can have several partners, as it were.

S: Yes. You may have a girl friend living elsewhere, or you may have just casual sexual encounters, or you may have two or three women that you regularly visit.

Siddhiratna: And that situation is OK as long as the celibate state leads to contentment.

S: Yes, I'm saying that if you regard contentment as the positive counterpart of the Precept of *Kamesu Micchachara* then you can envisage three kinds of sort of sexual set-up and you could be observing the Precept, provided that you were content with whichever of those you happened to be following. Yeh? You could be living contentedly as a celibate person who wasn't chaste, living contentedly as a chaste person, and contentedly as a married person.

Subhuti: I think we ought to be quite careful about the use of those terms, because they aren't quite clear. In fact

S: We have always used the word celibacy instead of chastity, I mean I myself have used it, but I have always been quite aware of what celibacy meant in strict English, as it were. Of course, very often nowadays celibacy is used as chastity but I think it would be quite useful to retain that distinction.

But you could also say that, in a way, men who live in a Community aren't celibate, really, because celibacy implies a sort of separate establishment, an independent establishment, one of your own. So you wouldn't be celibate in that sense.

Siddhiratna: A kind of Pratyeka Buddha state. (Inaudible)

S: Yes, right. But perhaps we won't press that point. It is more the fact that you do not have any legal marriage tie. Yeh? Um? And you are not legally cohabiting with anybody, in a common establishment.

Siddhiratna: Married and chaste.

S: You could be, of course, married and chaste too, actually. You could be legally married but you and your partner could take mutual vows of chastity for a while, as some people in fact do. That is also.... and you could be content with that state. But contentment, as the positive counterpart is the keynote. No sort of neurotic reaching out in a dissatisfied way to some other kind of set-up.

I think that is quite important, that contentment. That is, as it were, just the way you function or the way you live. Something you take in your stride, whatever it happens to be, and with which you're quite content.

Siddhiratna: How in a sense do you assess when that contented state is?

S: Well if owing to a change of circumstances your status in that respect changes, you're just not upset, you don't mind. That's the only criterion really.

Siddhiratna: It doesn't affect what you're doing, or your practice etc.

S: Right. Yes. I mean, otherwise if it doesn't affect people's practice - I mean, their having of sex or not having of it - if they're getting on with their practice, they seem to be growing, they relate well with other people, they do all the things that they're supposed to do and that they're responsible for - well what does it matter, you know, what particular set-up they have in this respect? But if you see them not able to function, they're emotionally crippled, they're weeping on your shoulder, well then you have to say Well what's this, what's going on?

Anyway, time for lunch, I think, I hope.

S: Alright, we come on to Precept 7. '7. The Perfect Wisdom having been found within oneself in virtue of the guru's grace, it would be a cause of regret to dissipate it amidst the jungle of worldliness.' This, in a way, resembles Precept 4, doesn't it: 'One's own mind being of the nature of the *Dharmakaya*, uncreated, it would be a cause of regret to let it be swallowed up in the morass of the world's illusions'. So is there any particular point that arises in connection with this verse or this Precept that didn't arise in connection with Precept 4?

Vajradaka: The word grace I think.

S: The word grace.

Vajradaka: It often comes up in study groups. There's quite a lot of interpretation, different kinds of interpretation of the word.

S: Yes. Perhaps we'd better go back to the original words. I imagine that the Tibetan word that is translated here is *Chinlap* which again renders the Sanskrit *adhithana*. There's a very good note on *Adhithana* in Snellgrove's translation of the *Hevajra-tantra* - in fact I think I'll go and get it, and read it - it isn't very long, and I think that will give you a good idea of what it's all about. [Pause]

Yes, this is Snellgrove's note. *Adhithana* - it's A D H I S T H A N A. The 'S' if it was transliterated probably would be sh - it's sh - the 'S' with a dot underneath - *Adhithana*. Anyone who's interested can copy the whole note afterwards.

'From the literal meaning of position' - *adhithana* is position - *Sthana* is simply place, as in *Dharmasthana*, a place for the Dharma. From the literal meaning of position, 'this word is applied specifically to authoritative position and then to the power pertaining to such a position. It can therefore mean the power which belongs naturally to Divine forms and in this sense it comes near to the Christian conception of grace. It can also refer to the power which is experienced spontaneously in meditation or achieved through the recitation of mantras. In that it may be transmitted by a man of sanctity to his disciples it may also be translated as blessing. *Abhisekha* is essentially a ritual empowerment, *adhithana* refers to innate or spontaneous power, and always with the connotation of active expression. In the sense of grace or blessing it becomes however a form of empowerment. For its use in various contexts see empowerment in the Index.'

The Tibetan translation - that of *adhithana* - is *Chinlap* - literally power wave, hence Evans-Wentz's grace waves sometimes. *Chin* means power in the special sense of its inherent splendour, i.e. majesty. *Chinlap* is also used to translate Sanskrit *Prabhava* - power, lustre, splendour, which thereby becomes implicitly a synonym for *adhithana*. There is also the Sanskrit *anubhava* which means influence.'

So you get the idea? That it would be better to speak, in fact, I think of an influence, a spiritual influence, you know, rather than grace. It's almost like an aura, in a metaphorical sense. I mean, after all everybody occupies a position, doesn't he? Everybody occupies a position, so everybody has a power. That power is felt by others. Depending on the sort of position you occupy, so is your power and so is your influence. If you occupy a position of spiritual experience, the power, or the influence, will be spiritual. Do you see what I mean? So in the case of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, the position they occupy is one of transcendental attainment or experience. Therefore their 'influence', to use that word in preference to the word 'power', is of that nature so far as others are concerned. Yeh? Um? So *adhithana* is the spiritual power exerted by, say, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Gurus and so on, by virtue of the spiritual position they occupy. We must rather watch this word 'authoritative' here, it's not 'authoritative' in an administrative or ecclesiastical sense - it's in a purely spiritual sense. Um? So do you get this idea of the so-called 'grace'?

So, similarly with what is translated here as the 'grace of the guru'. The guru occupies a certain position - not a hierarchical position in the ecclesiastical sense - but a spiritual position by virtue of his own personal experience, knowledge, understanding, and so on - and pertaining to that there is a certain influence on others, especially on his disciples, and this is what is translated as grace. Yeh? Um?

Not that the grace or the *adhithana* or the influence has been a direct cause, with oneself purely passive - no, it has a sort of sparking-off function. Um? You can close yourself to it if you wish, as

well as open yourself to it. (Long pause)

So here reference is made to the fact that Perfect Wisdom develops, not simply as the result of one's own unguided efforts, but also, in part at least, on account of the way in which one has been sparked-off by the spiritual influence, as it were, emanating from someone more developed, or more wisdomful than oneself. [Pause]

So, 'The Perfect Wisdom having been found within oneself' because one's own mind is of the nature of the *Dharmakaya*, 'it would be a cause of regret to dissipate it amidst the jungle of worldliness'.

So instead of the morass of the world's illusions we've got the jungle of worldliness, conveying the same sort of impression.

Manjuvajra: Has this also got something to do with, like if you received a teaching or initiation, then you should continue to practise it?

S: Yes, that too, certainly. Yes. Also it suggests that if you allow that Perfect Wisdom to be dissipated amidst the jungle of worldliness, it not only means that your time, your energy had been wasted, but in a way the guru's also. Yeh? Um? Because Perfect Wisdom, in the strict sense, cannot be lost, because it's Transcendental. But one can, of course, have a wisdom, an understanding, or an insight, which doesn't amount to *Prajna* as a *Paramita*, and which therefore can be lost. Lost in the sense that you don't recur to it for a while.

Siddhiratna: I get the feeling that saying 'dissipated amidst the jungle of worldliness', it's saying don't misuse it or something. It's a kind of emphasis I pick up, you know. It's not saying don't share it or spread it or something; it seems to be indicating if you do that then do it with discrimination, as it were.

S: But the suggestion seems to be here that you become so pre-occupied with worldly things that you just lose your understanding, your insight, your wisdom.

Sagaramati: It could be that in dissipation you just sort of talk quite unconsciously.

S: Um. That's true, yes.

Sagaramati: Without regard to who you're speaking to, and just sort of waste it all.

S: Yeh. It could be that, Yeh. Or you go and write a book about it. You notice there's a sort of difference between the two comparisons - 'the morass of the world's illusions' and 'the jungle of worldliness'. I mean, 'morass', as somebody commented suggests a sort of sucking in. You know, a real gravitational pull directly beneath your feet. A jungle, something very tangled and complicated, in which you get really lost, tied up.

So one could sort of reflect, that if you do allow the Perfect Wisdom that you've found within yourself to be dissipated in this way, you're not only wasting your own efforts, wasting the guru's efforts, but wasting the efforts of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that have ever been, who have contributed to your development of Wisdom, directly or indirectly. (Long pause)

S: Anyway any further point on that Precept? As I said, it is rather similar to Number 4, though there are just a few points of difference. Have you understood this question of grace or *adhithana* thoroughly? That is clearer now, is it?

Ajita: What's the difference between the ritual *adhithana* and the spontaneous one?

S: Well the difference is that, you know, one is ritual and the other is spontaneous.

Ajita: Yeah. What's the use of having them then?

S: Well it suggests why does one have a ritual at all? It's as though the ritual provides a sort of formal framework. In my early days in Kalimpong, and in the early days of my contacts with Tibetan lamas I was much puzzled by this. It took me several years to work it out, as it took me several years to work out several other things connected with the Tantric Tradition. The difference between the *wong-kur*, that is to say the *abhisekha*, the ritual empowerment, and the *abhisekha* or the blessing, because sometimes you're given a particular practice or initiation and the practice within the context of the *wong-kur*, the *abhisekha*, the ritual empowerment. Sometimes you get it with just a guru's blessing, and I was trying hard to find out, well what is the difference, what difference does it make? And Tibetans seem to feel that it did make a difference, but they weren't able to explain very clearly in what way it made a difference. But anyway, there was a statement that gave me a clue, which was that a practice with a blessing from a spiritually developed guru was just as good, if not better, than a full initiation from a less developed guru. In other words, I came to the conclusion that the *wong-kur* and the *adhisthana* or the *wong-kur* and the *Chin-lap* - the ritual empowerment and the giving of the practice with a blessing - involved influences which did not differ in kind. It did seem from some of the statements I'd heard earlier on that the energy or the power that was involved was different in kind, but I came to the conclusion that in fact that was not so.

What happened in the case of the *abhisekha* was that there was a sort of ritual framework which provided the guru himself, and the disciple, with a kind of support, and to the extent that that support was present, well one might expect that the spiritual energies sort of involved, would be more powerful. Do you see what I mean? Perhaps you could say that the same teacher, transmitting a practice within a ritual context, could do it more effectively by virtue of the support that the ritual gave than he could do it without the support of the ritual.

But on the other hand, you know, a more spiritually developed guru with more power, as it were, could transmit just as effectively, without the ritual framework, just as effectively as a lesser guru with the ritual framework. Do you see what I mean? This was the conclusion I came to. So that there was no essential difference between the kind of power that was transmitted - to use that term - within the framework of the ritual empowerment, and the kind of power that was transmitted when one was given a practice just with a blessing.

Vajradaka: Another aspect though. Isn't the power that is transmitted or radiated also something to do with that particular practice? Say for example in the course of say a Tara initiation, that the lama or guru would have actually been practising that practice for some time before, and so that they would really be in contact with that particular... all the aspects of that practice. It would be like separating certain rays of a rainbow for example. It wouldn't just.....

S: Um. Yes. This is implied in what I said about the more or the less developed guru. I mean, he will be able to transmit more or less powerfully in accordance with the position he occupied, spiritually speaking, with regard to the practice.

Vajradaka: Whichever it was.

S: Whichever it was, Yeh.

Vajradaka: So he wouldn't necessarily give just a very broad enlightened blessing, he would be able just, say for example, to get into the particular quality.

S: Yes. Yes. Yeh.

Mangala: What are the technical terms again please, Bhante, *abhisekha* - ?

S: The *abhisekha* is the *wong-kur*, which is the ritual empowerment as Snellgrove translates it, and then the *Chin-lap* or *adhithana* is the blessing or the grace, or grace-wave.

Mangala: So getting a practice with a blessing, that would be *adhithana*?

S: Yes.

Siddhiratna: Does that mean for the recipient the experiential thing is the same, no matter which way he gets the initiation?

S: Yes. For instance, you might get a famous Rinpoche, let's say, and people want to take initiations from him because he is famous. So suppose someone wants the Tara practice, so they go along to him and they say, 'Please give me the Tara practice'. So he goes through the ritual, but maybe he's never done the Tara practice, maybe perhaps he hasn't even meditated, let's take an extreme possible case, but he is an incarnate lama, he looks it up in the book, the particular ritual, and he performs it. But there's almost no spiritual power involved at all. On the other hand you might meet, quite casually, walking along the road, some old monk who's practised for years and years, and just casually walking along the road he tells you about the practice and how to do it, and you definitely get something from that, much more than you got from your Rinpoche who had gone through all the elaborate ritual and technically given you a transmission of power, a *wong-kur*, an *abhisekha*. Yeh? So I came to the conclusion that Tibetans themselves are sometimes misled by externals. Not always, I mean many of them do realise the difference, as in fact I mentioned, somebody said 'Well if you get a practice with a blessing from a great lama it's better than getting it with the full ritual of empowerment from a lesser lama'. Many of them are certainly aware of these things.

But just because you get some young Incarnate Lama roaming around in America, bestowing Tantric Initiations and *abhisekhas*, it doesn't mean, really, that you're getting very much, necessarily; but on the other hand in some corner of some refugee camp you might meet some old monk who's been really getting on with his practice and who can really transmit something to you and explain to you what to do without any fuss or bother at all.

Ajita: When does it stop becoming Tantric? What is the difference between Tantric and ordinary blessings? Is there any difference between them or distinctions between the Tantric and.... Can you call the blessing we get as being Tantric or.... ?

S: Well what does one mean by Tantric? Strictly speaking, Tantric should be reserved for an initiation into or practise of a *Sadhana* which involves Buddhas or Bodhisattvas in *yab-yum*. And this, for obvious reasons, we haven't really encouraged very much here. So in that sense there isn't any Tantra, so far, in the FWBO except in an innocent iconographic form. Do you see what I mean?

But then again, even that mustn't be separated too sharply. If one thinks of the Tantra as the vehicle of energy, well yes there is a lot of energy involved in all our practices, surely. So to that extent they're all Tantric. In that sense the whole Movement is Tantric. So in that sense the Mahayana at its best is Tantric, so is the Theravada. (Laughter) You can't make these divisions too sharp. I've mentioned before that I've met Mahayanists who were Hinayanists in their attitude. I've met Hinayanists who were Mahayanists in their attitude. In the same way Vajrayanists who were more Mahayanist in their attitude, or even Hinayanist. I mentioned yesterday about Tibetans, despite their Bodhisattva Vows, keeping Buddhism to their self, or themselves, all these centuries, whereas Theravadins who are technically Hinayanists have been going forth and preaching the Dharma. So

the attitude of quite a few Theravada bhikkhus I've met who were technically Hinayanist, is quite Bodhisattva-like. And the attitude of some Tibetan lamas I've met is decidedly Hinayanistic! Even though they may be using the forms and the terms and concepts of the Mahayana. So one mustn't be misled by appearances.

Mangala: It seems that a lot of these traditional terms, you know from Tantric, and things that we've been talking about now to things just like monks and Upasakas, they all seem to be almost redundant and don't seem to apply very much to us at all.

S: They do. They do seem redundant, often.

Mangala: The ones that are Tantric actually be for us(Inaudible) for us, in fact in terms of practice and getting on with things.

S: Well, as loosely used, Tantric nowadays means generally something of more or less Tibetan origin. Tantric means Tibetan, Tantric Buddhism is Tibetan Buddhism, because the Tantra, the Vajrayana historically occupies quite an important place there.

Manjuvajra: I've always thought that the, sort of, things you've been talking about, transmissions from gurus to disciples, I've always thought that was a sort of Tantric thing.

S: But that's always happened in Buddhism. It happened between the Buddha and His disciples, and so forth.

Manjuvajra: Yes, but even so, I've always thought that that was what was meant by that aspect.

S: Ah, but perhaps the distinctive aspect in the Vajrayana is the specific, concrete, ritual support, which is, no doubt, definitely a support - ritual does have its own value.

Siddhiratna: When you said, Bhante, about the framework of ritual - I remember in *'The Essence of Zen'*, where you talk about the transmission of the Mind over and above the written Scriptures, when you talk of ritual, is that the sort of, taking that possibility and ritualising it to make it easier for it to happen? You don't have

S: That's right. It makes it easier for it to happen, in a sense it sets up a special set of circumstances. It sets up special conditions within which the spontaneous event is more likely to occur, yes. Just as when you set up special conditions for a retreat. You're more likely to have a good meditation. Even the good conditions don't guarantee that, but other factors being equal it makes it more likely.

Siddhiratna: It's a sort of proper function of ritual.

S: Yes, one could say that. You know, and among the factors which help are sort of colour, music, sweet smells like incense, the general sort of solemnity of the atmosphere, the concentration which ritual involves, and so on. All the associations of the symbolism.

Siddhiratna: Presumably you get the thing about no dependence on ritual as well, as an end in itself.

S: Right, yes.

Siddhiratna: it's only a means to an end.

S: For instance, we know that the *Transcendental Meditation* people, they set up a special sort of ritual context, don't they, for their initiations. Yes, they do, I've heard, at least in some cases, they go

on for four or five hours, and therefore something does happen - you can almost guarantee it, though it isn't automatic. Especially if people have been prepared for that beforehand.

Mangala: Actually I had one of those a long time ago.

S: Yes.

Mangala: We had to take along flowers, an off-white handkerchief, and maybe something else, but at least those two anyway.

S: And money was the third one usually, a week's wages.

Mangala: Oh yeah, apart from that.

S: So you can see the significance of....

Mangala: (Interrupting) Fruit was the other one. Fruit or something.

S: Um, yes. And now the ritual context in the case of the *abhisekha*, the *wong-kur* can make quite a difference, it can really help in, as it were, generating, you know, the necessary spiritual energy or influence, or whatever one calls it.

Subhuti: Is it really possible to be sparked off by that influence if you've never met the guru before, if you just, you know, go along.,.,.,

S: Well, yes and no. For instance, I mean, many Tibetans go and have an *abhisekha* from a guru they've never met before, but then the fame of the guru has preceded him, they've got a definite sort of picture. You might say that it might even be in a sense an imaginary picture, but there is some image in their mind, which they think of as the image of that particular person, which has a tremendous effect. Also you might say well would the ritual, you know, be effective if it was completely foreign to you, or involved foreign elements? Maybe not. After all, symbolism is very intimately connected with one's cultural tradition, one's own cultural tradition and environment and so on. So someone who wasn't familiar with, say, Tibetan symbolism, would just maybe be left cold by an *abhisekha* ritual.

Sometimes also, over familiarity would dull the edge of it - the other extreme. I was reading recently that - I think in one of Alan Watts' books - that young Japanese Buddhists who got so used to Japanese Buddhism, and associate it with all their grandmothers and old-fashioned things and old temples and temples that have been turned into museums and national treasures - to them Protestant hymn singing

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is really exotic (laughter), mysterious and fascinating - that really sort of sparks them off, you know, they want to do things in that sort of way because it's unfamiliar. So for them, the old ritual doesn't seem to work, the old magic has gone.

So you must be sufficiently familiar with it to be influenced by it, but not so familiar with it that it just becomes a sort of routine that doesn't influence you any more.

Vajradaka: Do you think you could just say very briefly what the difference is between the Hindu Tantra and the Tibetan Tantras?

S: Well one is Hindu and the other is Buddhist. (Laughter) And that makes a world of difference.

Vajradaka: Why are - I think I sort of heard you talk about it before, but I can't remember it. Is it that the Hindu Tantra seeks to unite with some kind of divinity, and that the Tibetan...

S: So does the Tibetan, doesn't it? You become one, as it were, with Avalokiteshvara or Manjughosa. Lama Govinda has hit the nail on the head, he discusses this, I think it must be in '*Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*'. He says that Hindu Tantra is concerned with power, power in the ordinary sense, even though in a highly developed sense, whereas Buddhist Tantra is concerned with liberation.

_____ : With what?

S: Liberation. And this is certainly the feeling you get from Hindu Tantrics, and I've met some of them. They're after *shakti*, power.

Siddhiratna: Is that the same sort of thing as having *siddhi* powers?

S: That's right, yes, in maybe a broader, more general sense than that, but that is certainly a form of it, yes.

Ajita: (Inaudible) mantra a faster path to Enlightenment.

S: Faster.

Ajita: I think you mentioned that in your lectures, that the mantra has got to be the fastest way to...

S: I think it's all bound up with this conception of energy. I mean, the Tantra, the Vajrayana itself is, broadly speaking, considered to be a faster path. I don't think one can take this in a very, sort of, mysterious or occult sense. There's no such thing as a faster path. There's only the question of your own speed of progress. But it does seem that the Mahayana, in its later stages, became rather intellectual, in the sense of rather conceptualised, so that, you know, Mahayana Buddhists might have been very learned, might have had even a lot of insight, in a sense, what I call mental insight, but the greater part of their energies was not involved, and this is where the Tantra came in. The Tantra seems to have developed as a means of putting people more and more in touch with their basic energies and uniting those energies with the clarity of the mental vision, and in that way contributing to the attainment of Enlightenment. One gets the impression that late Mahayana Buddhism - in India I mean - became rather intellectualised, and in a way, sort of spiritually anaemic, maybe a bit alienated, a bit academic. It was alright as far as it went, but it was very limited, very one-sided, so the Tantra contributes the element of energy and richness, so you bring the two together, the energy and the richness with the clarity and the purity.

Devamitra: At what point in Indian Buddhist history did this happen, and at whose time, sort of after Nagarjuna, or about his time?

S: It's very difficult to say when it started, but it certainly, sort of, grew as a tendency. We know so little about that whole period, you know, in the historical sort of way, but certainly the leading Acharyas seem to have been rather one-sidedly intellectual.

Devamitra: So they weren't really spiritually developed.

S: Not completely, you know.

Devamitra: Not completely.

S: Not completely, it would seem, certainly judging by their mode of expression. It seems also - I've mentioned this before - that in Indian spiritual tradition as a whole, there was this overemphasis on the analytical and the intellectual, and Buddhism itself also seems to have suffered from that. You notice the change when you pass from Indian Buddhism to Chinese Buddhism, from Indian Mahayana to Chinese Mahayana, especially Ch'an, or what became Zen. It seems as though the Chinese Buddhists got in contact with their energies, so to speak, in a rather different way, maybe via nature, but in the case of the Indians and the Tibetans, they seem to have got in contact with them more via ritual and symbolism.

Manjuvajra: Yesterday Sagaramati and I were talking about the difference between, sort of, Classical and Romantic and what you've just said seems to connect with that. The classical is pure and clean, but without the sort of fire and the energy of the romantic.....

S: Right. I've been feeling that way, rather to my surprise, a little bit, recently about Mozart. I used to be very fond of Mozart, I've been finding Mozart rather anaemic in a way, rather thin, Yeh? I've been going back to Bach and Handel, I find them more full-blooded, as though the Baroque is the synthesis of the Classical and the Romantic. There is the sort of sweetness and the richness and the melody and all that; at the same time there is the clarity and the balance and the control.

Sagaramati: It's really the Romantic in the musical movement, that started just after Mozart and Haydn.

S: Yes. I think Beethoven was the transitional figure. Early Beethoven sounds very much like Mozart, and late Beethoven sounds a bit like Brahms, or early Brahms sounds quite a bit like Beethoven.

Sagaramati: I went down to the British Museum and I got a real feeling there of that purity, in the Greek sense, clarity and purity.

S: Don't forget that the Greeks painted their images in bright colours, which we would probably think quite vulgar.

Mangala: That's all worn off, has it?

S: Yes.

Subhuti: They'd also have been used ritually.

S: Oh yes, certainly. Certainly they'd have a lot of gold on them.

Mangala: I didn't know that. They painted over marble and stuff?

S: Um. Yes. They painted them.

Subhuti: We tend to think of Greek art as being almost in a museum. (Laughter) It was actually used.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: (Inaudible)

S: For instance - this is going a little bit off the track, but never mind - I remember on the occasion of

my visit to Italy, going around Catholic churches, and I felt that this is nothing due to Christianity, this is Pagan, this is Mediterranean Paganism, and the worship of the old Greek and Roman gods, and maybe gods coming from Egypt as well, goddesses too, was very similar in atmosphere and spirit, maybe not in theological content, to the worship of the Virgin Mary, Christ, the saints, in Catholic churches. One didn't feel that one was in the presence of anything Christian, as one did, or at least I did, on certain occasions in even Catholic churches, say in Luxembourg and in France. You felt you were in contact with something Christian there. But not in Italy - it seemed very Pagan indeed - the priests seemed like Pagan priests, in their long lace cassocks and things like that, and their bald heads. And I remembered that I'd read, some years before, some of Borrow's books - do you know about Borrow? Borrow who wrote '*Lavengro*' and '*The Romany Rye*' and '*The Bible in Spain*' - that whole series. He was a fanatical Protestant, and in one of his books he meets a traveller who'd been to Africa, and there's a rather long and elaborate section - I forget the details but the gist is this, that this traveller had been on the coast of Africa somewhere, maybe the Gold or the Ivory Coast, and he'd met, again I forget the details, a medicine man, and this medicine man had come towards him in all sorts of robes and flanked by people with feather fans and all that sort of thing, and it was the great mumbo-jumbo. And this same traveller, relating to Borrow, some time later had been in Rome and had met the Pope, and the minute he met the Pope - It's the great mumbo-jumbo! (Laughter) So, it's just the same. So Borrow, as an ardent, not to say virulent, Protestant, which meant anti-Catholic in those days, was retailing this to prove the great Protestant point that Catholicism, popular Catholicism, was just Paganism, hence the justification for the Reformation. The Catholic Church had sunk into Paganism. Now before going to Italy I used to think that this was just Protestant polemics, and a great exaggeration, but after actually visiting Catholic churches in Italy, I realised what the Protestants were on about - perhaps I'd be happier with the Paganism than with Protestantism - but they had a point from their point of view. Do you see what I mean?

So, in a way we are, through popular Catholicism, in contact with popular Paganism of the Greco-Roman period. It's not all that different, I think, aside from the theological content and certain other things.

For instance, to give another instance, in Greece, in Epydaurus, in the museum there are ex-voto objects. People who have been healed had hung up a replica of an arm or a hand, or a whole leg, which had been healed - exactly the same thing in the shrine, or tomb, or cathedral of St. Anthony of Padua in Padua - exactly the same things and exactly the same atmosphere and spirit. Some in stone, some painted, some in silver, but the same hands, the same legs, the same feet, everything. So you got an impression of sort of continuity on that particular level of popular religion.

Anyway, where did we arrive at all this from? (Laughter)

Subhuti: Classical and Romantic.

S: Classical and romantic, yes. And the Tantra providing, as it were, the, in a sense - though one is speaking very literally - the spiritually Romantic element, the energy, whereas the Mahayana in its later phases seems to have supplied the Classic.

Subhuti: What element do you think will provide that for us?

S: I think it's quite difficult. Work?

Subhuti: It seems to me....

S: Work?

Vajradaka: What, that is the classic?

S: No, the romantic.

Subhuti: The energy.

S: Kovida's going to give a talk at the next speakers' class on 'Poetry and Work'. I don't know whether he's been having any thoughts in this direction. But yes, you need to get in contact with your energy. Ritual doesn't work for most people. It's more just a pleasant aesthetic enjoyment. You don't even get aroused as much by it as you do perhaps by Beethoven or even by Mozart at his brightest. And perhaps we can't, in our present state of organisation, have it on a grand enough scale. If you've got a place like Westminster Abbey and you've got an enormous choir and organ, well you can go in for ritual then, but if you've just got a little makeshift place and a few people and no musical tradition of your own, you can't really do much in the way of ritual can you? If you aren't even sure about your symbolism, whether you want to have a bit of old British Pagan symbolism, or a bit of Tibetan symbolism, you're not sure. It doesn't really work very well. So maybe work is the best way of tapping our energy, work and communication. But energy has to be there, otherwise your spiritual life is just a matter of playing with concepts, and a bit of moral observance at the same time.

Vajradaka: And that corresponds with the Classical.

S: In a very weak, low level sort of way, yes.

Devamitra: Sorry, what corresponds to Classical?

S: Well just, you know, occupying oneself with the concepts of Buddhism.

Subhuti: And yet there's still something, I think, that we're not really tapping very strongly, because people do find, a lot of people find work quite dry, they find it goes quite dry. There still seems to be the element of colour and excitement that isn't really.....

S: Well, they must be working together, and working for the sake of the realisation of a certain vision. It's work which becomes really exciting.

Manjuvajra: One of the things I think at Sukhavati that always has to be balanced, you know, the work has to be done so you've got to organise the work, you've also got to spend as much energy on developing the vision.....

S: Right, that's true. It must be imaginative work. I think perhaps there's been a bit lacking there, that people haven't had imparted to them sufficiently the vision. I mean no doubt certain people have had the vision but others haven't been able to see it, and just get a dim reflection of it in the attitude of the people who do have it. You know, like in Dante's Divine Comedy, Beatrice gazes at the Trinity and Dante gazes in the eyes of Beatrice. (Laughter) So in that way, if Subhuti has the vision, everybody else has to gaze in Subhuti's eyes! (Laughter) Which sometimes perhaps they forget to do, or sometimes they do but they think he's just absent-minded, they don't realise (Laughter) that he's seeing a vision. (Laughter) Or at the very worst they might think he's just conning them. (Laughter) Do you see what I mean? Your face has to shine, as it were, so that people are really convinced you do see a vision.

But there must be energy, otherwise it becomes so dull and dry. There will be energy but it will be repressed and therefore troublesome, or actually negative, in its effects.

Nature is invigorating - contact with nature. But it seems to be a great lack in people's lives generally, this inspiring element. Why do they flock off to concerts? So many people do, especially in a place

like London. Even in Norwich, whenever there's a concert it's full. It's difficult to get tickets. So clearly this provides something that people find really lacking in their lives and which perhaps they ought to be getting in a normal, regular, steady sort of way. Perhaps formerly they did get it from religion but they can't now, not from the traditional religion in this country.

Maybe we'll close there for refreshment, because there's going to be a completely different topic in the next Precept.

Mangala: I was just going to say, Bhante, not all that long ago, down in Brighton, we just finished the Puja one night, this is just in the Community, and we just came downstairs and I'm not saying we always listen to music, but there just happened to be a cassette player there and it was actually the radio, and some kind of chorus music came out, absolutely incredible, it was so powerful, so uplifting, and more of that somehow.....

S: I think a lot of people do listen to music don't they? I think it's a very good thing, provided they listen to uplifting things.

Mangala: I suppose I was meaning almost some way of rather than sort of listening to it on one's own or occasionally when you've got time, but almost to somehow bring it more into our actual activities.

S: Well sometimes people do go off to concerts together, don't they? Especially from Sukhavati.

Mangala: I remember a few years back, you probably remember down at Keffolds, one night Bill Douglas he played some Mozart in the Shrine Room.

S: Um. That's right. Yes.

Mangala: That was absolutely astounding, so beautiful you know.

S: Well we've had Jinamata playing at Pundarika haven't we? This brings me to a more general point; I think actually that more recently we've been overlooking the, or neglecting the arts a little bit. I think that's been unavoidable just because we've been so much occupied with other things, and rightly occupied. I think the arts have tended to get a bit neglected. I mean in terms of our organised activities.

Devamitra: What sort of things do you have in mind?

S: In a way I don't really know, because that whole area is so undefined and unexplored. I just feel that we ought to be doing more, possibly, say, more in the way of well, say producing Yeats' dramas or something like that, or the Golden Drum activities - I don't know what's happened to that, has it been swallowed up?

Siddhiratna: It's been swallowed up by work.

S: By work, yes.

Manjuvajra: It's still there. It's still kicking.

Siddhiratna: They did *'The Hunting of the Snark'* at one time and something else again which was quite good. I feel that, I don't want to get into a big rap about it but there's definitions of what's inspiring, I don't think it's worth placing a hard and fast definition on it like it's classical, or something like that, I think experimentation should be a keynote actually. I think, the same way that

it was experimentation at Pundarika with Jinamata and Suvrata in the same way it's experimentation with people playing gongs and bells in Pujas. That kind of experimentation is probably very good. But to say that only classical music is going to be uplifting or inspirational or even part of the ritual I think is a limitation.

S: No, what I have in mind is, there are some kinds of music which definitely are quite discordant from the spiritual point of view.

Siddhiratna: What would you think that is?

S: Well, listening to them myself sometimes, they just seem so crude. I mean, even some so-called Classical music, using the word 'Classical' very broadly, you know, in a way maybe that it shouldn't be used, Jinamata in her talk which was read out at the Convention made the point that, strictly speaking, Classical music should refer to the music of the latter part of the 18th century. It shouldn't be used to refer, say, to Beethoven or Brahms or Schubert, as it usually is. They're Romantics more. But using it very, very broadly, quite a lot of Classical music, or semi-Classical music is quite coarse and crude, actually.

Siddhiratna: Classical and Romantic at concerts, which should apply to any time era as it were.

S: Yes. Like other such general concepts they have their uses, but they also have their limitations. But the point I really want to make is that not all music has a skilful effect on the listener from the spiritual point of view. You can have music that is very depressing and very sort of self-indulgent and sentimental, and just downright crude. And this is not the sort of music that helps to raise your level of consciousness or get your energies flowing in the right direction, i.e. in the direction of a higher state of consciousness. I mean if you're in a sort of state of total apathy, well even crude music might be required, just to get you out of your state of total apathy, into some sort of semblance of movement.

_____ : Awareness.

S: Um? Well no, awareness would be a long way off, I imagine. But that would not be within any sort of spiritual framework. It would just be to wake you up a bit.

Siddhiratna: In sort of Pagan ritual, I mean how would one see sort of, I don't know, Bacchanalian kind of ritual or something like that? Dionysorian sort of rituals etc.

S: Well the Bacchanalian ritual is a contradiction in terms, because ritual, you know, suggests a certain pattern, a certain balance or even sobriety. There weren't, strictly speaking, any Bacchanalian rituals - simply things going on. (Laughter). If you get my meaning. People just going wild, you know. That isn't ritual, even though it's done on certain occasions or in connection with certain festivals. Even though you do certain things it's ritual only in a very broad sense indeed.

Siddhiratna: I'm not sure terribly, I mean I'm not quite sure what Pagan means. Pagan always seems to involve, I don't know, a sort of liberation of the individual from a social context or something like that.

S: Well not necessarily because, you know, in the so-called Pagan times, Pagan countries, the control of the group was very strong indeed. The tribes are Pagan you could say, you know, compared with what is Christian, but the tribes exercise very strong control over their members. One should be careful not to use the word 'Pagan', sort of, too loosely.

Siddhiratna: Do you want to give it a definition.

S: In the strict Western historical context 'Pagan' pertains to the culture and way of life prevalent especially in Greece and Rome, before the rise of Christianity.

Siddhiratna: I think for a lot of people 'Pagan' has got the idea, maybe of dancing round totem poles and jumping through bonfires and that.

S: I don't know whether people ever danced around totem poles, they danced around the maypole. Whether the maypole is, strictly speaking, a totem, I think is an anthropological question which would need to be investigated! (Bhante chuckling to himself).

But, you know, the general point being that it isn't enough to clarify one's concepts and get rid of *miccha-ditthis*, you also need to bring your energies into harmony with that, into line with that, and unify the two, by whatsoever means. I mean, you can sit around, thinking all sorts of correct thoughts, but that doesn't get you really very far by itself. In the case of the sort of people that we often criticise, who, say, go along to Buddhist societies and read books about Buddhism and listen to lectures, well what is happening in their case is, well, their concepts may be alright, at least to some extent, assuming them to be free from the grosser *miccha-ditthis*. Maybe they have got it quite clear and straight about the Eightfold Path, the Four Noble Truths, and the Three Signs of Being, but where are their energies? You know, their energies are just going round and round in the jungle of worldliness. Spiritual life, from a certain point of view is basically a question of getting one's energies out of the jungle of worldliness and onto the Spiritual Path, in the direction indicated by one's clear concepts.

Mangala: It's like the way most of us, I suppose, have kind of pulled out to some extent, of the jungle of worldliness and all the pleasures that haven't really found substitute pleasures yet, to some extent haven't found, on a spiritual level.

S: In other words, things which will spark your energies off on those levels, and enable them to be integrated with your vision, or at least with your clear thinking.

Mangala: Yeh. It seems like that's where we could be more, kind of, pulled down as it were, more from our heads but our kind of um.....

S: So, in order to keep you going on the spiritual path you very often need the booster of a bit of worldliness, which is ridiculous, really, isn't it? You can only keep going along the spiritual path if you allow yourself the occasional sin (Laughter) as a sort of compensation, to put it very extremely. Do you see what I mean?

Siddhiratna: I think one could question even the notion of pleasure, that you need actually pleasure. I mean, I think, as it were, your spiritual evolution should be a pleasure.

S: Um. Yeh. But very often it isn't!

Siddhiratna: (Interrupting) You don't have to go and find pleasure, whether you're on a higher or lower spiritual level. Pleasure doesn't come into it. Things should involve pleasure, it should be a pleasure. And what you do, and who you do it with and how you do it, you know, is what you see as you need as that element that may be missing.

S: Yes. But usually people see, you know, the path of the higher evolution, as a grim, pleasureless business, and they can only keep plodding along that path if they occasionally allow themselves a bit of anti-evolutionary pleasure. Either a visit to some crude sex and violence film, you know, or a wild party, or just going out and spending some money, or something of that sort. Or getting drunk

occasionally. That's a pity.

Siddhiratna: If those things are necessary then one should do them, you know.

S: You're not getting enough pleasure out of the spiritual life itself. Which doesn't again, imply a puritanical attitude. It doesn't mean that you can't, in a sense, enjoy so-called worldly things, like good food, you know, but you're just not attached to it, you don't bother about it, you don't depend upon it in that sort of way.

Siddhiratna: It's almost if you have to think about them, then there's something wrong. I mean, if I do something like that I just do it, I don't need to think twice about it. It just happens and that's it. It's not as if I wonder if I can and if anybody can see or this, that and the other.

S: I think this whole question of energy is so important, as I've said before, and if people come along to an FWBO Centre or meet Order Members, Mitras, and so on, if they feel there's real energy around, and life, that will attract them more than anything else. But if it's dull and flat, people will not be attracted. Possibly dull, flat people, for some reason or other, who just gravitate to general dullness and flatness, but not anybody else.

So, in a way, that's a very important thing, you know, for chairmen generally. Chairmen must have energy. Yeh? Um? So you must really look after yourselves in that respect, and make sure that you are full of energy. If you are not full of energy as chairman of a Centre, the whole Centre's just going to be flat, and you're going to have a flattening influence on any other Order Members who may be trying to help you. It would be better for you just to get out of the way, go and have a solitary retreat or go and listen to a concert for the evening.

Anyway, I think it's tea or coffee time.

Sona: That was very marked in Sweden. On a Swedish retreat the first four days there was a bit of difficulty with people and things started to get a bit flat, and I became a bit flat. There just came a point where I wasn't - you know, just suddenly got inspired, with a lot more energy, and after that everything picked up and it was much more inspiring.

_____ : Hands up for coffee.

S: No, there isn't any, is there?

_____ : Imitation coffee - grain stuff,

_____ : Everyone else tea?

(There follows a long discussion regarding refreshments!)

Subhuti: I've often wondered, quite a bit recently, whether the Sevenfold Puja isn't a bit above most people's heads.

S: I should think it was! (Laughter)

Subhuti: Therefore, I think that it doesn't fulfill the function that it should do, for as many people as it could do.

S: Yeh. Do you mean above their heads in the sense that it suggests a prematurely high ideal, or that simply it involves too many unfamiliar concepts and symbols?

Subhuti: Both, but I'm increasingly thinking that actually it's the form that's more important, that it involves a prematurely high spiritual commitment. It's supposed to be a practice for the development of the Bodhicitta, which most people haven't even thought in those terms.

Kulamitra: And also at Sukhavati it seems to be too refined in the poetic sense. I mean, I really noticed when I arrived at Sukhavati that people sort of charged through it, and they really want to chant something quite strong, and it doesn't seem suitable to do it in that way.

S: Ah, maybe I translated from a Puja text I had, or initiation text I had, the invocation of a wrathful deity which came in the Newsletter once. Maybe we should chant that at Sukhavati, about the wrathful flames and things of that sort. (Laughter) Long, long ago.

_____ : Was that Vajrapani?

S: Don't think it's Vajrapani, but it's one of the well-known wrathful deities.

Mangala: Also the Vajrasattva Mantra's very powerful isn't it?

S: But again I really sometimes feel like questioning this whole conception of 'powerful'. People, for instance, talk of the Vajrasattva Practice, or Padmasambhava Practice as powerful. Well, all the practices are powerful, spiritually speaking. Do you see what I mean? But people seem to, you know, by powerful to mean, not spiritual energy which is really the question, but just a sort of ordinary human vigour. Um? Yeh? Um? And, to sort of be using, say, the Padmasambhava Practice or Vajrasattva Practice, just to sort of stir up just ordinary human vigour, which is really not its function at all.

So it isn't that the Padmasambhava Practice or Vajrasattva Practice, is powerful in that sense, whereas the others aren't. They're all equally, you know, potent, spiritually speaking, if one practises them.

Sagaramati: You get this in, using the analogy in music. People say, well, punk rock and stuff like that is full of sort of energy, but to listen to Handel, it's very, there's nothing in it.

S: That's nonsense, isn't it. Yea? Well, you know, I would say there's more power in a soft Largo of Handel than in all, you know... it doesn't become powerful just because you turn up the volume.

Vajradaka: I was just wondering about what you said regarding the Sevenfold Puja at Sukhavati.

Subhuti: I'm not just talking about Sukhavati.

Sona: Yeh but I think Kulamitra was talking about Sukhavati. But assuming that you get in contact, or liberate a lot more energy through work, that in a sense you do need certain rituals that are a bit more refined and a little bit sort of poetic, just to sort of refine that energy. Otherwise it just gets gross.

S: I did devise that 'Basic Puja' originally in the Finnish context just because Vajrabodhi felt, and I felt rightly felt, you know, that the Sevenfold Puja was, in fact, premature, spiritually speaking, you know, for a lot of the people coming along, and also involved concepts and symbols that they just weren't familiar with, or perhaps didn't want to be familiar with at that stage, and apparently they have found the Basic Puja very useful there. The Sevenfold Puja is used within the Order, and I believe on the Regulars night, but otherwise not, and maybe we should consider making that practice more general.

Subhuti: I think we should in a sense, value the Sevenfold Puja higher.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: By not selling it short by just doing it on every available occasion - really prepare people for it so that they do actually

S: Well, we shall be able to now, because we've got a whole short seminar on the Sevenfold Puja.

Siddhiratna: Have you had one then?

S: We have had one, yeh.

Devamitra: Where?

S: When did we have it?

Subhuti: A couple of weeks ago.

Vajradaka: In July.

S: Oh yes, on the ten day study retreat; it was one of the items studied then. So, what we're planning to do is, the next short seminar which is going to be transcribed - in fact Kulananda is transcribing it - and will be published by Ashvajit, is the one on the *Tiratna-Vandana* and the one after that will be The Sevenfold Puja. Yeh? So that is good basic material for Mitra Study Groups.

Siddhiratna: There seems to be very little in terms of conceptual explanation and so forth of the Sevenfold Puja.

S: But there are lectures explaining it, by the way.

Siddhiratna: They don't explain it very fully.

S: No?

Siddhiratna: The one on the Sevenfold Puja - Poetry and Devotion in the Sevenfold Puja, doesn't actually tell you very much.

Subhuti: It's more on the background.

S: Anyway, in the seminar we went through it verse by verse, and spent, I think, four whole days over it. And also we did the Refuges which meant three days on the Refuges. So there's more basic material there.

Sagaramati: That brings in the question whether we should use the Sevenfold Puja on beginners retreats.

S: Hmm. Hmm.

Sona: What I did in Sweden, I started off for the first few days just with the shorter Puja and when the atmosphere seemed sort right, then I introduced, and there seemed to be the demand, people wanted more in the way of ritual, I introduced the Sevenfold Puja.

Kamalasila: That's what we do in (unclear). In the first week we did the Basic Puja.

Sagaramati: I think that's the ideal opportunity to introduce the Puja, when you are (Inaudible).

Vajradaka: We've been doing the Basic Puja for the last month or so at our Regulars Class because there'd been an inflow of new people, and that's quite a good way of doing it, letting them get into the Basic Puja for a while and then have the Sevenfold Puja. So the Regulars Class over a period of a year would have a bit of both.

(Long pause)

Mangala: Still on the point of Pujas, at the last Order Day there's been controversy about the Positive Precepts, whether they should be done in the plural or the singular or a mixture of both.

S: Yes, someone mentioned this to me - I was thinking it over and I thought in the end, the conclusion that I came to tentatively, was that in the Pali it's all in the singular, even when we repeat it together, so maybe it should be in the singular also, even when we repeat it together. Thought there is the point that when you say we, you introduce the aspect of community, there is that as well. Do you see what I mean?

Mangala: But in a way you could say it by saying 'I' it's in a sense yourself and others, you know, you are doing it together.

S: It's all 'I's together, yeh.

Mangala: It's like I go for my Refuge, you do that in a context with other people.

S: Yes. On balance I was inclined to think that it should be 'I' throughout, to accord with the Pali, yeh, um. So I purify my mind, not we purify our minds.

Devamitra You said that you were going to write a positive version of Five Precepts suitable for classes. Did you ever get round to that?

S: Well that only means the, you know, making one for the fifth, doesn't it?

_____ : Yes.

S: But I did see somewhere that this had been done, I think on the Women's Retreat. Yes?

_____ : At Sukhavati.

Anoma: I don't know where

S: It was Mindfulness and Awareness, it appeared. I just found it on the page in front of me so I just recited it. (Laughter) It was quite new to me. I didn't know who'd done it.

Mangala: How does it actually read, that ?

S: 'With Mindfulness and Awareness I purify my mind', corresponding to the fifth of the Five Precepts.

Devamitra: Well, I remember talking about that with you about a year ago, and Mindfulness and

Awareness basically mean the same thing, and it wasn't really good enough, so I altered that to 'With Mindfulness and Recollection'.

S: But again you could make the same criticism. Mindfulness and Awareness sounds a bit weak. I'll just have to think about it, though the idea's alright. Something like 'With pure and stainless Awareness' or something like that. Yeh? Um? Yeh? Or 'Unfailing Awareness'. Or 'With Awareness brighter and brighter'. Or 'Ever increasing Awareness'. Something of that sort. I'll just have to think about it.

_____ : Diamond-like.

S: Um?

_____ : Diamond-like.

S: Diamond-like - yes.

(Long pause)

Vajradaka: What would be the Buddhist version of 'Alleluia'?

S: Sadhu.

Subhuti: I just noticed a tendency in - I think it came up in the Order Day, and on other occasions, when people do Sadhus, the first one's quite loud, and then the second one's softer, and the third one's softer. It sort of seems to take away all the affirmation from it, it becomes a kind of mantra.

S: If anything, the succeeding ones should be louder, one would have thought.

Devamitra: You've frequently done it in that way yourself, sort of softening....

S: Ah, that's in the context of the Puja. I was thinking of the, you know, after the Ordinations. No, I think maybe in the context of the Puja there shouldn't be too much difference between the last Sadhu and the next section of the Puja.

Subhuti: Yes, but if it's the first Sadhu at the same level as the Precepts that you've been chanting and then they go

S: Ah, that shouldn't be. No, they shouldn't sink below that level.

Siddhiratna: It's sort of connecting it with 'Om Shanthi'

S: No, it shouldn't be like that, no.

Siddhiratna: It's funny how these things change. Suddenly there's this whole new way of doing the Puja which has grown up over a period of about six months. I don't know where it's come from or why.

S: Doing the Puja at the double, you mean?

Siddhiratna: Well, yes, that's one example, Sadhus are another example.

end of tape five tape six

I can remember the whole thing about belting out Vajrapani as loud as you could.

Vajradaka: At one point it actually took on a minor inflexion, a sort of minor key - some of the chanting.

Mangala: Another point, Bhante, I'm not quite sure what the '*Namo Nama*' means in the.....

S: Salutation. It's two different forms of the same word. As if to say Salutation and Again salutation. Repeated salutations, simply that. You could say that one was Pali and the other Sanskrit - that would not be incorrect. (Laughter)

Mangala: Like Vandana.

S: Yes. Yes.

Manjuvajra: I saw it translated somewhere as All Hail.

S: Um. *Svaha* is also translated as 'All Hail', isn't it?

Vajradaka: Someone once said - I think it was Ashvajit -it was like the Salutation to all the Three Jewels all together, like a sort of composite.

S: Yes. I've never said that, but you could say that.

Kamalasila: I'm sure I've seen that translated written down somewhere as 'May all energy be fulfilled'.

S: May what?

Several voices: (Rather confused) old Puja book.

S: Well, the sooner we get a new Puja book the better. (Laughter) I really would like to expand it, revised and enlarged.

Kamalasila: Somebody said you were writing a new Puja, from the Sutra of Golden Light.

S: That's true. Well not writing, simply arranging. I have more or less done that, I did it about two years ago, but then I didn't sort of put the finishing touches because I was just so busy, but just recently I did mention that and say I would be doing it as soon as I could. That's just, you know, instead of extracting the relevant verses from the *Bodhicaryavatara*, they've been extracted from the *Sutra of Golden Light*, with, of course, special emphasis on the Confession, just as a sort of possible alternative, especially when one wants to emphasise the Confession - possibly for use just within the Order.

(Long pause)

There's one point, before we pass on to the next Precept - one point in connection with energy - I just wanted to mention, it sort of came into my mind while we were talking, it involves, I think, a possible *miccha-ditthi*, though maybe that, you know, would be clear only if people say what they understand by these terms. I have heard people referring in the course of discussion and so on, to male and female energy and I rather wonder what they mean by that. Does anybody know?

Mangala: I would think, I mean, I wouldn't actually use those terms myself, but

S: You do.

Mangala: No, I don't.

S: No. I don't

Mangala: I would imagine that by male they meant vigour, you know, kind of pretty heavy, well slightly heavy-handed, whereas by female they mean more gentle, more sort of receptive I suppose.

S: But isn't that a contradiction in terms then?

Mangala: How?

S: Well can you have a sort of a gentle energy as a different kind of energy, or is it simply energy, as it were, of a lower voltage?

Mangala: Maybe it's just a different expression? A different way of expressing.

S: Ah, but, you know, the energy itself is distinct from its expressions. You could say that you can have a male expression or a female expression possibly - I'm not necessarily saying that - but energy itself, can it be described as either male or female would one say, especially spiritual energy?

Mangala: No, it's just energy, isn't it?

Sagaramati: Where has it come up?

S: Well, it's come up in several ways. Let me think back to two cases. For instance, I did hear a report that there was, say, an Order Meeting at Aryatara, I think it was - this must have been at least a year ago - and there was walking and chanting going on. Yeh? And then some women Order Members turned up.

Anoma: A woman

S: A woman Order Member. I thought it was two or three, actually, but anyway, if it was the same occasion, then I got a report back that the woman Order Member or Order Members had been taken aback by this 'male energy'. Yeh? So I thought to myself, well in what sense is it male energy? Or isn't it just energy? Yeh? After that, I got a letter from, I think, more than one, or got letters from more than one woman - it wasn't an Order Member - saying 'I want to operate on female energy'. And then again I said, in what way is female energy different from male energy? Isn't this a sort of unreal distinction which overemphasises the distinction between the sexes in the spiritual context? This is what I was thinking. Yeh. So can anybody throw any light on this? Isn't energy just energy? If you're say chanting the *Vandana* or if you're doing the walking and chanting practice and there's energy there, isn't it just energy?

Anoma: It is different, I mean, I see your point that energy's energy and maybe that (unclear) male and female energy but I mean it is quite different.

S: So what is different?

Mangala: Well presumably it's the way the energy manifests, I mean, presumably it isn't just energy, it's more a sort of physical thing. But on a more relative level there's

S: But in what way is it different? Supposing, for instance, that a man and a woman are meditating, and each of them experiences energy in the course of that - isn't it just that each is experiencing energy, I mean, the question of expression does not arise in this particular case? Aren't they each experiencing just spiritual energy?

Mangala: But I think meditation's a context where you're in a much less, sort of, relative situation. There isn't any physical limit for a start.

S: Alright, then supposing, you know, a male or female Order Member, or a man or woman generally, chants. Can one speak of the one using male energy to chant and the other using female energy to chant? It doesn't really seem to make sense to me - even though they may chant in a different sort of way. Yeh? Do you see what I mean?

Sagaramati: How do you get the difference? I mean, surely you say male energy because it comes from that person who is a male, not female.

S: Yes. Quite. But is it, because energy may be coming through them rather than from them? Is it male energy? Yeh? Or is it not just energy, or in the case of a female, is it not just energy, rather than female energy? Yeh? So that suppose someone says 'Well I want to work with female energy' or 'With male energy', does that statement really have any meaning or, you know, or has it a meaning which maybe shouldn't be expressed in that particular way? Yeh?

Sagaramati: Only if the terms 'male' and 'female' are valued. I mean understood in the context that the male energy sort of seems there's more there, so therefore it's more valuable.

S: Well then, male energy is just a greater energy in that case. Yeh? So one should not say male energy but just say more energy. Yeh?

Anoma: I'm not so sure about that.

Siddhiratna: Male and female seems very, not arbitrary, but I mean, surely you're talking about Individuals, and you can have some Individual who happens to be a male but is very much in touch with his feelings and emotions and can chant very softly, and you have some Individuals, female, who's feeling really energetic and is going to sound like a man. So, whether it's male or female is very arbitrary.

S: Yeh. So therefore one should simply say more energy or less energy, rather than speak in terms of male energy and female energy.

Siddhiratna: Talk about my energy - talking in terms of?

S: Yeh. Yeh. Yeh.

Sagaramati: I don't think you can get away from the thing, because I think if you get a group of men together there's more energy. If you get a group of women together there's less. I think that.....

S: Not necessarily. I would say if you've got a group of, say, women belonging to the Friends together, there will be more spiritual energy than a group of men outside the Friends.

Sagaramati: But that's bringing in spiritual. I'm just talking about energy.

(There follows a lot of rather confused cross-talk, mostly inaudible)... the women's study retreat. You

said you felt it was very low on energy compared with....

S: That's true. But that was also three years ago. And there've also been Men's Study Retreats that have been very low on energy. Yeh?

Mangala: something to do with, something like, just volume? I can think, for example, if you've got a room full of men, I think in this particular case a lot of men who are walking and chanting and there's going to be a lot of volume, and apparently a lot more energy than there might be if you had a group of women walking around.

Anoma: But in say walking and chanting, I mean, it doesn't seem to happen so much now, but in those days, I mean, there was a sort of thing about people, sort of, going around like this which I found really horrible, you know. I mean that's... you say that's energy, but I mean, I felt quite energetic, but I didn't want to walk around like that, so I mean.....

S: That wouldn't really be an expression of energy, that would be more like a distraction, that would be more like the energy leaking away. Yeh. Um?

Mangala: There's also the question, like we talk about gross energy and more, sort of, refined energies. But I mean in a sense, how can you....

S: Well in a way the whole concept of energy - I mean this is basically what I'm getting at - is metaphorical. Because what is energy in a scientific sense, and this is where the term comes from - energy, I think, is defined as capacity for work. Yeh? Um? So you can't therefore speak of a male capacity for work and a female capacity for work. Yeh? Because they've both got a capacity for work. It's difficult to say that one can do more work than the other, certainly within the spiritual context, even though the kind of work may differ a little, but it's not that the one can do more and the other can do less. So therefore I rather wonder what people are talking about when they say they want to, sort of, start working with a 'female energy'. Yeh? Maybe, you know, there is a valid point, but it is not really that.

Anoma: I think there is but I don't know that I can.....

S: Um. Yeh.

Mangala: Perhaps it means something a little bit gentler or ...

Anoma: It's the way of going about things more.

S: Um. Yeh. Yes.

Siddhiratna: Do you think there's some distinction, Bhante, between male and female, sort of identities on a relative level, masculine and female genders, as it were, but is there not a point in something like masculine or feminine or feminine and.....

S: I think you probably could say, you know, that there was a masculine way of operating and a feminine way of operating, which is usually associated with, you know, the two physiological sexes. I don't really see that they're therefore operating with different energies - certainly not at the spiritual level. I don't feel that at all. For instance, if I, say, lead a meditation or a Puja on men's Retreat, and then again on a women's Retreat, I certainly don't feel that there's a different kind of energy around, especially, certainly when people are meditating, it just doesn't feel like that at all. It feels just the same. On the other hand I'm quite aware that when the men chant there's a greater volume of sound, and in the case of the women a lesser volume of sound, a higher pitch, I mean one is quite aware of

that, but I wouldn't like to distinguish that in terms of different kinds of energy. Yeh? Um?

Mangala: I suppose energy is just the wrong word.

S: Perhaps it's a word, well maybe not the wrong word, maybe there just is no other, but maybe it's a word which is so ambiguous that we should use it with great caution. Yeh? Um?

Mangala: I mean obviously what this person felt at Aryatara was an experience. You can't invalidate it just because you don't agree with the terms.

S: Um. Um. Yeh. Right. It's the interpretation of the experience that one is questioning. Well maybe, you know, if it was you, you opened the door, maybe a great blast, a great shock, as it were, but then a man might have experienced the same thing, you know, especially a quiet sort of man, or someone who's just coming in, who's not acquainted with the Friends at all. You might have got just as big a shock. Well, like the people you mentioned the other day coming to Sukhavati. Yeh?

Subhuti: It sounds a bit as if it, in this particular instance, so-called male energy. So-called, if it wasn't real....

S: Ah. Yes.

Subhuti: real masculinity, it was just, sort of, rather forced, and contrived.

S: That's true, yes, yes. Um. Yeh.

Sagaramati: There seems to be a confusion of low energy, and refined energy. That's where the confusion

S: Um. That's true, yes. Yes, especially, say, when you're describing say Punk Rock or things like that, as though that's got a tremendous amount of energy, whereas Classical music has got very little. Though you haven't got necessarily more energy because you've got a louder voice. So in the same way women don't necessarily have, you know, less energy just because the volume of their sound when they speak is less.

Siddhiratna: Doesn't it also mean that they're not necessarily more refined because their volume is less?

S: Ah, that's true also, yes. That is also true, yeh. I mean, men don't necessarily have more energy because their voices are louder, women don't necessarily have less because their voices are softer. Men are not necessarily coarse, you know, because their voices are lower in the register than women, nor are women necessarily more refined because their voices are higher in the register. So you have to be really careful of applying these sort of sexual stereotypes, and just see the individual more, especially in the spiritual context.

I mean, a woman might speak with a very small, quiet, gentle voice, but there may be tremendous energy in what she's saying, and a man may just sort of bluster in a very loud voice and there's really nothing in what he says at all, there's no energy in it, really. He's just got a big mouth.

Siddhiratna: All bark and no bite.

S: Right. Not even any real bark! (Laughter) So I just think that if we really want to look at our experience and describe what is happening, we have to use this vocabulary of energy very circumspectly, you know, and very carefully. Because I certainly don't see any validity in this

distinction of male energy and female energy, it just doesn't seem to correspond to anything with which I'm familiar, you know, from my own experience, and, you know, experience with other people. But that's simply the point I'm making.

Mangala: It's funny how things like this develop, isn't it?

S: A sort of jargon that doesn't really have any meaning.

Devamitra: There was some talk, about three or four years ago, about people doing organisational things having more gross energy.

S: That's right, yes.

Devamitra: I mean, it's the same basic *miccha ditthi*, isn't it?

S: Yes.

Devamitra: And other people, sort of, not putting their energies in because.....

S: The less you did the more refined your energy was! (Laughter) Anyway, let's go on to the next Precept. (Long pause)

8. To sell like so much merchandise the Sublime Doctrine of the Sages would be a cause of regret.

So how does one sell like so much merchandise the Sublime Doctrine? Does it mean charging for things like Retreats and Classes and Lectures?

Mangala: It's placing like a monetary value on something which is basically, you know, priceless. You can't really put a price on something like that.

Manjuvajra: Is it also sort of forgetting the use of the Dharma, and using it as a means of livelihood and a profession.

S: I think this is basically what it is.

Devamitra: Sort of like in the Eastern countries, performing sort of funeral rites and marriage blessings and things like that.

S: Yeh, right, yeh. I certainly feel it, you know, with some of the so-called gurus and lamas who come from the East to the West. They have got a certain amount of knowledge, in some cases at least, but they seem to use it just in order to make money, and this is really a 'selling of the Sublime Dharma like so much merchandise'.

Mangala: I suppose really they actually - it's a bit like what you were saying the other day as regards charging for meditation and in this case the money's more important really than the doctrine, and they care really more about the money than the doctrine. To charge for say the meditation class means that really you care more about the doctrine but that you just happen to need some money to....

S: Yes. Right.

Siddhiratna: That's still, there's no way that a stranger, say, is going to be able to differentiate one from the other easily.

S: Not at first, no. No there isn't. You know, he only will be able to differentiate when he knows you better, and knows what is actually happening and the spirit in which you work.

Siddhiratna: I think, say, with Transcendental Meditation, I mean the fact that they charge for something, I mean used to think that was bad, but I don't know any more. I wouldn't like to say whether it's bad or not because I don't actually know anything about Transcendental Meditation. There's also this thing about - isn't there some sort of situation with Tibetans, lamas and gurus that you actually pay money to as an offering?

S: Right. Yeh. That's true, yes.

Siddhiratna: So it seems a very sticky area.

S: Yeh. Right.

Siddhiratna: What you said yesterday about, it's a most utilitarian question where if you are out in a field, you have no overheads, then you wouldn't charge.

S: Yeh. Right.

Siddhiratna: And unless you get a situation like that (inaudible)

S: Um. Yeh. Um.

Sagaramati: We do that say in Manchester. We have courses at our house we don't charge, but if you have a Centre and you've got to pay rent, we'll charge.

S: Yeh. Right. Yeh.

Sagaramati: There are other things like you might lose people because you charge. Some people say we wouldn't come if you charge us.

Devamitra: I think that's really the point I made earlier to Sagaramati, that if you did start charging, say for meditation classes you might find that you wouldn't get younger people along, especially very young people.

S: Um. Why, just because they don't have the money?

Devamitra: They don't have the money, yeh.

S: Is that really so?

(Confused and inaudible interruptions)

_____ : You mean of school age?

Devamitra: Seventeen or eighteen

S: Well it is easy to make a form of concession to students and old-age pensioners - that's what's usually done.

Subhuti: We do seem to derive considerable advantage from the fact that our classes are free, that

they're the only ones that are free in Britain.

S: Ah. Is it so?

Subhuti: Yeh. People often comment that

S: One has to consider that very carefully then.

Siddhiratna: It was also a policy at the E.E.M.C. that you actually provided some classes where people could pay. If they weren't paying they just felt almost like there was like something going on.

S: I think, say, whether rightly or wrongly, perhaps among quite a few people the impression has got around, which is no doubt justified in at least some cases, that, you know, that the running of meditation classes by at least some organisations is just a sort of money making racket. Yeh? So, if that becomes, you know, too prevalent, that sort of idea, then one would just not be able to charge.

I really get this impression reading, you know, advertisements in, say, *'The East-West Journal'* for, you know, sort of Buddhist happenings, courses and retreats and so on, in the States. One really gets the impression it's, you know, just a money making thing. So if in fact that does happen, that meditation becomes popular and then people start cashing in on it, and using it as a means to make money, you know, as Vajrayogini told me they were with Gestalt Therapy, then of course we might have to consider just not charging at all, just to mark that difference of attitude in a tangible way. Even if it did make things a bit difficult for us in other respects.

Siddhiratna: It seems to be a difference between, like meditation classes, you don't charge for meditation classes, but for courses where it involves a speaker or, you know, some sort of outlay.

S: But even the meditation classes would involve an outlay, I mean, in the form of someone, you know, taking the class, who perhaps if he's a full-time taker of meditation classes would need to be supported and then there are the overheads in the form of the building. But however unreasonable people's, you know, attitude might be, you know, just considering ourselves alone, if there is a general feeling that meditation classes are just a means of making money you might have to stop charging just to be sure of getting sincere people, or at least not scaring away sincere people.

Subhuti: I think that's why these six-week meditation courses have been so successful.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: By and large because they're free.

S: Well I think then one has to consider that point very carefully.

Sagaramati: You can always ask. In Manchester we have just covered the costs of the courses by asking people to give some dana.

_____ : I think that's quite successful where it's done.

S: Because, I mean, it doesn't take into consideration perhaps a sort of *miccha-ditthi*, you know, on the part of some people, that they ought to be provided with everything for free. You know, that's the sort of other extreme. But, you know, we can only deal with that if we actually kept them coming along. If we scare them away to begin with, we'll never be in a position of being able to deal with it.

Subhuti: We don't charge somebody to read you a poster.

S: Um. Right. Yes.

Devamitra: Maybe we could charge for just the Regulars Classes. In a sense they're the people that are getting the most out of Centres and, are quite often stingy people! With one or two notable exceptions.

S: Anyway, we have discussed, you know, almost ad nauseam, this question of peoples reluctance to give, so we'd better not get onto it today. But another point, another aspect of the question I wanted to raise was, supposing you as a teacher, whether from the East or from the West, had started off with some quite genuine stock of knowledge and experience of the Dharma, but that you were gradually seduced into exploiting, in fact, your own knowledge and experience, and making merchandise of the Dharma and using it purely and simply as a means of livelihood, what would be the effect of that on you and on your knowledge and experience of the Dharma?

_____: Your knowledge would become just a sort of remembered knowledge, it wouldn't be a living knowledge.

S: Ah. Yes, it wouldn't be a living knowledge any more, yes.

Sagaramati: It would also become more dogmatic.

S: More dogmatic, yeh.

Vajradaka: Also, probably, a bit selective.

S: In what sense?

Vajradaka: Well, it would protect your financial interests.

S: That's true, yes, yeh.

Subhuti: (Inaudible)

S: Yes. Um.

Devamitra: You'd be little better than an academic really.

S: Academic, yes.

Devamitra: You would just reduce your (Inaudible)

S: Right. Yeh. You might even end up, quite literally, as an academic, yeh? Finding a post in, you know, some college or university.

Mangala: You'd be worse than an academic!

S: In a way you would be worse than an academic.

Mangala: At least an academic, he's never pretended perhaps to be a real Buddhist or a real teacher.

Ajita: Could that happen if the Bodhicitta had arisen?

S: No, not if it had really arisen, I would say, surely not.

Sagaramati: Didn't this happen in Greece with the Sophists?

S: That's true, yeh. Well, we don't have to look as far away as Greece, but yes it did happen, and it can happen anywhere.

Vajradaka: What? They became professional?

S: They became professionals, yes. Selling their services to the highest bidder almost. Certainly, you know, the lesser Sophists. They were the sort of Dale Carnegies of their day. How to win friends and influence people. How to be a successful orator, which meant politician. Oratory was the key to politics in the City State.

Manjuvajra: Just been reading a bit about Milton actually. Apparently he sold his services to Cromwell for twenty years, writing papers in support of Cromwell's... well in support of the revolution.

S: But he believed in the revolution.

Manjuvajra: Well at some points it says that he spoke for the Party rather than for himself, in this particular part that I was reading. That during those twenty years he was writing for the Party. After those twenty years he continued to write on political subjects, but wrote from his own, he wrote from Milton from then onwards.

S: Um. Rather an odd reading of Milton's life I would say. His official position was Latin Secretary, which meant that he had to translate into Latin, which was the language of international diplomacy, the international correspondence of Cromwell's government. That was his post. And he believed in that government, though he didn't agree with it on every point. He believed it didn't go far enough in the right direction, but it was going in the right direction, yeh? He was as close, maybe to Cromwell as he was to anybody. Cromwell being an independent, not a Presbyterian. Milton went even beyond the independence apparently, yeh? He was very, very radical. But he certainly believed that Cromwell was going in the right direction and he agreed with a lot of the things he did.

For instance, when Cromwell protested against the massacre of the Piedmontese Anabaptists, well, you can tell Milton's feelings from the sonnet that he wrote, yeh? Um? So he would gladly have translated, you know, what Cromwell wanted to say, protesting to the Duke of Piedmont about those massacres - it would be fully in accordance with Cromwell's sentiments, and, you know, express them as strongly as he possibly could. No, I wouldn't agree that Milton sold himself at all - that's a side issue - I'm going to read my Life of Milton again - as far as I remember he really believed in what he was doing. Even though, yes, he would have liked to see Cromwell go even further in the same direction.

Mangala: I think this money thing is quite an important issue in a way, because, I mean, we do have to support ourselves, and more and more we realise this, and at the same time until our Right Livelihood projects are going well, in a sense the Dharma's all we've got to 'sell', as it were.

S: Um. Um. Well it is the distinction between, you know, making money so that we can propagate the Dharma, and propagating the Dharma as a means of making money. Not for the sake of propagating the Dharma, but for ourselves.

Subhuti: We're not paid. We're supported so that we can do it.

S: And not only supported so that we can do it, but supported so that we can develop also, and have facilities for our own development, so that indirectly we shall be able to propagate the Dharma even more effectively. So supposing, you know, you as a Chairman are supported, it's not enough to give you your bare food, clothing and shelter so that you can go on taking courses and classes - you'll kill yourself that way, sooner or later. But, you know, the Chairman needs to be supported in such a way that he can go away for, you know, solitary retreats, he can buy the books that he needs for study, he can have maybe the secretarial facilities that he needs, so that he doesn't have to do everything himself.

Siddhiratna: And a car to tour around.

S: Um? A car to tour around, yes, yeh. Only one's own sort of sensibility and spirit of dedication can, you know, tell you when to stop, when you've got what you really objectively need and are not going beyond that, and not indulging yourself. You may need a holiday, from a Dharma point of view, and you should not be afraid of giving yourself one, if that is possible. But obviously, you know, it's not easy to be sure sometimes, whether you're giving yourself what you need or just being a bit self-indulgent, and that can only be decided by you, there can be no hard and fast rule and everybody must, you know, be able to trust your decision.

Siddhiratna: Isn't there something to say there, Bhante, about Chairmen living within sort of community situations and common-purse situations. Although it is him who says, 'I need a holiday', it's up to the other people in his community or his situation to decide, yes he does, maybe he does but not yet or something like that.

S: Well the man who wears the shoe knows where it pinches, yeh? If he thinks, if he says to the community 'I really do need a holiday', I think, if he's fit to be Chairman at all, they should just accept that, and see that he gets a holiday, yeh? He'll probably spend his holiday answering letters anyway! (Laughter)

But I think you have to beware of a situation where your Chairman is virtually exploited. This can develop. And maybe if the Chairman understands the overall, sort of, financial situation of his Centre, well he can sort of tighten his belt if need be, but if he sees that the Centre can afford to support him in the full sense, he shouldn't be shy of taking what he really needs.

Again, it's a sort of razor's edge and only he can really know the situation and therefore take the final decision, with the loyal support of others.

I've felt that in the case of some Buddhists and their bhikkhus. I've felt this a little bit at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara - that one was virtually exploited and - I can't say that I was especially exploited, I was a little bit - but I've seen some bhikkhus almost being ruthlessly exploited by their laity - with the rationalisation that all bhikkhus have to lead a strict life, but it was simply that the laity were exploiting them, and not being very considerate. Or just being mean. Sometimes - not very often, but sometimes. 'Oh our bhikkhus don't need that, they're very ascetic' - they're just a means to provide what they need. In some cases.

Devamitra: Can I just raise the point about charging? Because you actually say in one of the Golden Light lectures that you wanted to avoid encouraging people having the attitude of paying for the Dharma, so it's a bit - if we need money and we start charging for things, people are going to have that attitude, you know, they're actually paying for it.

S: Well we just have to make it clear that they're paying for the facilities that make it possible. Yeh? Um?

Devamitra: I didn't quite mean that actually. It's more their, sort of, inner attitude of sort of possessing the Dharma.

S: Well you can meet that halfway to some extent, but if everybody insists on having everything for free, it just isn't possible. You maybe even have to lose some people. You can't run things on that basis, just because you don't have any rich backers in the background.

Sona: I think the big problem comes when you start charging too much, and people who can see quite easily that if there's fifty people coming to a class, and pay two or three pounds each, you're making much more money than you actually need to run those facilities, whereas if you were just charging a sort of nominal fee, anybody with common sense would just work it out.

S: Then of course again, it's not necessarily so easy and straightforward as that, because you might be wanting to finance other things like, you know, production of literature, there's publicity, and so on, which doesn't meet the eye immediately of the person attending the Centre or the Class.

Kamalasila: People don't usually realise how much things do cost.

S: I'm sure they don't.

_____ : Publish balance sheets to let people know.

S: Well even that - most people don't sort of read a balance sheet, or they have a feeling it's all been cooked a bit, or something like that.

_____ : If someone did bring up the matter, you could give them a balance sheet.

Mangala: I think people usually, if they do actually come along, they can usually tell pretty soon what sort of an organisation.....

S: Yeh, the general spirit and, you know, very often it depends how you ask or how you put things to people. That makes such a big difference. But anyway, the main thing is that one must watch one's own inner attitude and be sure that in one's own case one is, you know, trying to get money when one is trying to get it, just so that the Dharma can be propagated and not the other way around. This is just what one has to watch individually; that's the great principle. Howsoever it works out in terms of to charge or not to charge for this or that facility, or this or that activity.

Alright, on to the next Precept.

'9. Inasmuch as all beings are our kindly parents, it would be a cause of regret to have aversion for and thus disown or abandon any of them.' You know the assumption on which this is based, an assumption very common in Tibetan Buddhism - based in turn on, you know, the teaching about rebirth - namely that in the course of all the numberless, you know, previous lives that we've undergone, all the people that we meet in this present life have at some time or other been our mother or our father, so how can we have an inimical attitude towards them?

I mean, this implies two things. One is that you actually believe that, and two, that for you, the parental relationship is automatically a positive one. So you can see what the Tibetans are trying to do in this way, or the gurus are trying to do in this way, just to try to get you to develop a positive attitude towards all living beings, which is fine, which is an integral part of Buddhism, integral part of the spiritual life. But is this the right sort of argument to convince most modern people? That's the real question. Do you think it does or it would? Really.

Vajradaka: You can sort of slightly change it and say for a British person, if you go back seven generations, then every single person is related. Apparently

S: But do people care all that much about their relations nowadays, for that to mean very much?

Mangala: go back seven generations?

Vajradaka: Well like, you know, it goes back, sort of, equal in numbers, like your mother and your father both have mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters and you go back.....

S: They've all got their descendants.

Vajradaka: And they've all got their descendants, and the further back in time you go the less people there are.

S: For instance, you've got say four cousins, eight second cousins, thirty-two fourth cousins and so on and so until, you know, the whole population virtually is your umpteenth cousin. So they're all related to you! You know, people quarrel with their brothers and sisters.

_____ : It's rather a ghastly thought! (Laughter)

S: So the ideal is excellent, but the motivation, or the would-be motivation would seem not quite to work in our case. So, you know, what is one to do about this? Can one do anything about it? I mean, one accepts that, you know, we should develop this positive attitude, attitude of metta towards all living beings, especially those with whom we come into immediate contact. But can we encourage ourselves to do that, to develop that attitude in this particular way? Is it in fact possible?

Siddhiratna: In what particular way?

S: By saying to oneself that well they were all my mothers and fathers in previous lives. Can we really feel this?

Devamitra: You can only do it at such a point when Buddhism is so established the doctrine (inaudible)

S: Um. Yes. People believe it so firmly.

Vajradaka: (unclear) pretty positive attitude towards your mother, father as well.

S: Right. Yes. So that they immediately call up a positive image and a positive feeling.

Mangala: It also relates a bit to the images sometimes used in the metta, that you should treat all beings as if they were your child....

S: Child?

Mangala: Well, like the way a mother.....

S: Ah, in the Metta Sutta, yeh.

Mangala: Like the way a mother cares for her child.

S: Yes. Well, I was just going to say that most people, you know, find it difficult enough to love the

one mother or the one father that they've got. What to speak of loving those who have been their mothers and fathers in the past.

Siddhiratna: Couldn't you then say something in terms of, sort of, ecology or pollution or something like that, where one begins to see that what you do and the way you do things actually affects things on a global scale?

S: Yeh, but there is the motivation for caring about that. If the motivation is lacking, I mean the Precept is trying to create a motivation.

Siddhiratna: I think the motivation could be there, although it's a bit stretched, but it's a little bit selfish, rather than loving.

S: You mean people as part of the ecology?

Siddhiratna: Well if somebody acts in a particular way over there it's going to affect you sooner or later

Sagaramati: It sounds as if to begin with you have to put it in terms of how developing that attitude benefits you, how you'll be happier and more balanced.....

S: Um. Yes.

Anoma: I think the stuff about the self and others is quite (Inaudible) feel like that but there isn't really a difference.

S: You mean in the metaphysical sense, or just in the common-sense way that others feel just as you feel?

Anoma: Yeh. I mean, feeling....

S: Um. Yeh.

Anoma: (Inaudible)

S: Yeh. Um. But I mean, very often the way we treat other people is just due to lack of imagination. We don't really realise that other people have feelings too. That other people can be hurt as well as ourselves, so we should treat them just as carefully as we treat ourselves. Consider them as much as we consider ourselves.

Manjuvajra: Isn't there an element of gratitude in this as well? That you feel positively towards other beings because you're grateful.

S: Yes. Because they've done a lot for you. That might be an interesting approach or a useful approach. That you think, well you're a member of a society and you're really dependent on a lot of other people. I mean, you ride about in a motor car, but who made that motor car? You know, a lot of people working in a factory, so feel grateful to them. What about the man driving the bus or driving the train? Or even selling you a ticket, or selling you things in shops? You're dependent on all these people. Yeh? So shouldn't you feel grateful to them for what they're doing for you and the way in which they're making it possible for you to lead your whole life? They're doing all sorts of things you wouldn't like to do for yourself. They're doing these things for you, as it were. Admittedly you, amongst others, but, I mean, for others including you also.

Mangala: The usual tendency is to see things (Inaudible)... usually tend to see how people are hindering you, as it were. 'What an awful shop that is, I had to wait here for ten minutes. This bus is late.' (unclear)

Siddhiratna: Strictly speaking those people are actually working for a wage, aren't they?

S: They are working for a wage.

Siddhiratna: They don't rejoice in that job, it's just

S: But you can, as it were, disregard that, and just see that, well they are in fact helping you, whether intentionally or unintentionally. So just restrict your attention to that, as it were, and feel grateful to them. I mean, there are some people who do enjoy their work, you know, whether rightly or wrongly. Some people do it, at least, cheerfully, you know, maybe the bus conductor gives you your ticket quite cheerfully. He doesn't seem to mind, he seems to be quite happy to give you your ticket. Feel grateful that there is a bus service and that these people are running it and that they don't seem to mind. You know, sometimes you meet people who do seem to be enjoying their work and who seem to feel quite happy to render a service to you.

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Sona: In fact most people you meet outside really enjoy the fact that they're working. If they're not working then they get sort of(Inaudible).

S: You know, I think in our, you know, quite justified attempt to see the relativity of things, and the lesser value of worldly things, we mustn't adopt a cynical attitude. I think that's also important. Or a depreciating attitude. Should be quite objective.

Vajradaka: I know it probably isn't true in the bigger cities, but I sense this kind of gratitude in Kyoto quite strongly.

S: Yes.

Vajradaka: In a general way.

S: Because it varies a lot from place to place and person to person. For instance, you can drive into a garage and, you know, once or twice I've noticed the young chap who, sort of fills you up with petrol, seems to really resent having to do it. But, you know, drive into some other garage on some other occasion and it's all done very cheerfully and they're happy to be of service, kind of.

Manjuvajra: Mind you, if you show a bit of gratitude towards that resentful person, they often brighten up considerably.

S: Yes, quite, yes. Maybe one of the reasons why they feel resentful is that no-one, people seem always to take them for granted as though they're part of the petrol pump.

Manjuvajra: But we have the tendency to do that, you know, just because somebody is receiving a wage, or doing it to further their career. We don't, we think well, you know, they're not giving anything to me, they're just doing it purely selfishly, whereas I don't think that's actually the case.

S: Well at least you will encourage them to do it for you if you show that you appreciated it and were grateful that they were, in fact, doing it for you. Yeh? And that what they were doing was useful and helpful to you.

Mangala: I think very often, just one's own attitude really determines what you actually see and experience. If you're feeling really positive and friendly yourself, well that seems to be the sort of experience you have. If you're feeling a bit down or whatever....

S: I notice some people behind counters have got into really quite a bad state. I used to notice this in London, especially when I was say shopping in Muswell Hill. There's a great difference between people. There are some people in some shops, you couldn't ever catch their eye to say thank you for what they'd sold you. They always avoid your eye. Yeh? They never looked you in the face, so it was quite difficult - well you couldn't smile because they wouldn't see the smile. Yeh? But there were other people that always handed you your purchase with a big smile and you could, sort of, smile back and say well thank you very much and goodbye. Yeh? And so there was something human in the transaction. And there was a certain other group of assistants in, I remember, W.H. Smith, and they were all older women who clearly considered themselves superior to the job and wanted to show it, and were most unfriendly in fact. But other, sort of, to coin a phrase, more working-class type of women, in a grocer's shop, very friendly, and happy to serve. Glad to see you. Quite different sort of attitude. So you could have a friendly word with them and say thank you in a genuinely grateful sort of way. I mean, I think it's as though people behind counters very often get into the habit of the way of being treated as part of the machinery of the establishment by most people, so they just behave in that sort of way, and it requires a real effort on your part to establish some sort of human contact, which one should ideally try to do always. Not treat them as just part of the machinery.

Kulamitra: I think the reverse is true, I mean, working in a situation like a restaurant, serving customers actually, that side of the counter. I mean, sometimes for a long period of time, people just are completely unaware of you as a human being, and you start to feel really bad. On the other hand, if someone, you know, just looks up and says hello and thanks a lot, you just really cheer up.

S: Yes. Um. So maybe it's best to, sort of, take the attitude, well people are doing something for you objectively, you know, even though, in their own minds they're just working for a wage. So, objectively, you have a reason to be grateful. So show that gratitude, express that gratitude. That will help the other person to realise that he isn't just working for wages, he's actually helping you, you appreciate it and you're aware of it, you're grateful for it. And that will, sort of, humanise the whole thing, at least to some extent. I don't want to, sort of, be sentimental about it, because it may be a rotten job that he's doing, and ought not to be doing it in fact.

Vajradaka: I think we've got this across to some of the people who work for us in the Town Hall, the people who do our (audit?)

S: Yes. Well, I'm sure everybody behind the counter as the Sukhavati shop, you know, serves with a big smile.

Subhuti: (Inaudible) Kulamitra! (Laughter)

S: Grinning from ear to ear! But yes, I think this consideration of gratitude and the inter-linkedness of, you know, modern society, and our mutual dependence on one another, is a good way, at least a good starting point, for developing metta. We're only where we are and able to do what we are doing, due to the co-operation, witting or unwitting, of thousands of people.

_____: When you sit down to a meal, if you think of all the people that have been involved in that.

S: Well not all that many in our case, because it's mostly stuff from our own garden (Laughter)

_____ : Like a cup of tea!

S: Tea, yes - even a cup of tea. Especially if you have sugar! (Laughter) Well, I've seen tea factories, which I don't suppose you have. And I've seen how many processes the tea goes through and what a skilled operation it is - there are fourteen distinct processes, and different people involved in each of those processes, to get you your cup of tea. (Laughter) And do you appreciate it? Of - well, yes you do in a way, but you appreciate the tea itself, the drink, but you don't appreciate the labour that's gone into it, and the skill that's gone into it. So one can think, you know, start in terms of the Movement as a whole when you're on a Retreat, well, what has made this possible, you know, it's the result of the work of quite a lot of people over quite a long period of time, that has made it possible for you to go on Retreat, so at least be grateful to all of them. I must say that personally I've been finding, this last six or eight months, that people seem to be expressing much more gratitude than before. I've quite a few letters, in fact, that I never used to get earlier, expressing peoples gratitude that there was an FWBO at all - especially relatively new people, and how much it meant to them, and how really grateful they were, and that they wanted to express this. This is a quite new development over the last, say, six or eight months. I don't think I ever received a letter like that before from anybody. Apart from say Order Members who in the course of a letter just happen to say, well how glad they were that they were part of the FWBO etc. etc. But these are from relatively new people. Just how grateful they were for the FWBO and how grateful they were to those who had set it all up, and how much they were getting out of it. There've been about half a dozen letters like that recently, and this is quite new.

So it's a very positive sign, this expression of gratitude. It shows a very good spirit among many of the new people who are coming along, and that they are getting quite a lot out of it - it shows that too. I remember sometimes in the old days you could go a year or so without a thank you from anybody, but it's quite different now, it seems.

But anyway, that is one way into the development of a positive attitude towards other people. Any other possibilities, can anyone think of? [Pause] Well one could look at it the other way - think, just reflect on the trouble you cause other people! Sometimes one does, doesn't one? Don't you think?

_____ : Lots and lots and lots (laughter)

Siddhiratna: Last minute changes.

Subhuti: I found after that lecture on Going for Refuge when you mentioned the Cosmic Going for Refuge and that had quite a strong effect on me.

S: Well in a way you should feel grateful to the whole of the vegetable kingdom, which makes it possible for an animal kingdom to exist, which makes it possible for consciousness to exist.

Subhuti: It's got some sort of identity.

S: Yes.

Subhuti: Anything that showed life and energy.

S: Yes. Yes. Um.

Devamitra: Was that dwelling on the inter-connectedness of phenomena?

S: In a way, yes. In a way.

Devamitra: And actually those ideas are, are becoming more accepted, aren't they?

S: Um. Yes.

_____ : In a real way.

S: In a real - in a scientific way even.

Devamitra: That's what I meant. *(Pause)*

S: Recently I read a book, which I'll mention, by Hardy, called '*The Woodlanders*'. Has anybody read it?

_____ : Ananda's had it.

S: There's a very good sense created in that of feeling of nature, the environing nature, and you, or man, is emerging from this, and, in a way, sinking back into it in some cases, but in other cases sort of going on and out from it. It creates a wonderful sort of feeling or sensation - all this greenery which surrounds human life. I think it's, in that sense, one of the most beautiful novels I've ever read. A feeling of great harmony, despite the tragedies that occur in the contents of the novel, but all contained within this sort of overall harmony of the forest, the woodland. You get that note struck from the opening pages when you descend into this wood which is surrounding everything. It's sort of, to change the metaphor, the Sea of Life out of which individual lives come, back into which they go.

So if you reflect what trouble you cause other people, well what sort of feeling is this liable to arouse in you? I mean, trouble that you can't help, perhaps. Not that you want to give them trouble, but sometimes you can't help it. What sort of feeling would this arouse in you?

_____ : Remorse.

S: Remorse, in a way, yes. Though not a real remorse if you couldn't actually help it - it's sort of inherent in the situation almost that troubled other people. There'd certainly be regret. Regret that you had to do it, and a sort of compassion for them, a pity for them, that they just were so unfortunate as to be in that position. And then maybe a feeling of wanting to make it up to them, and do something for them.

Subhuti: And consideration for their failings.

S: Yes, and consideration for their failings. After all, you know, people had to put with so much from you, and you're willing usually to put up with very little from other people. Just it would make you more forbearing towards other people or a bit more careful in your dealings with them, your handling of them. *(Long pause)*

S: Any other ways, possibly, of developing metta towards all living beings? Any other techniques or considerations?

Kamalasila: You could easily be in the position that they're in. It could easily be you.

S: Um. You mean there but for the grace of God go I, sort of approach, um. *(Pause)*

So 'inasmuch as all beings are our kindly parents, it would be a cause of regret to have aversion for and thus disown or abandon any of them'. We could sort of paraphrase that - Inasmuch as all beings

contribute, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, to our own present well-being, it would be a cause of regret to have aversion for and thus disown or abandon any of them. You could say something like that.

You could say that people do trouble you, but they trouble you only sometimes, whereas they're actually sustaining your existence all the time. Do you see what I mean? The fact that you have a house to live in, the fact that food comes to the door, or that you're able to go shopping for it. That there are all these other facilities - that people's efforts, that other people's efforts are keeping these facilities, making it possible for you to live all the time. Any annoyance, like a strike or something like that, is only occasional. When railwaymen, for instance, go on strike, how annoyed one is - the wretched creatures wanting more money, greedy lot, you know - two trains not running today! But when the trains do run, do you ever think of the railwaymen, or are you ever grateful to them? No, not a sausage - you buy your ticket, board the train and that's that. It's all part of the existing machinery. So actually people are helping you much more than they're hindering you.

Mangala: Sometimes I sort of just reflect a bit on society and in many ways you see hundreds and hundreds of shortcomings but what has almost amazed me is that it actually works at all! That it does actually come, however much it goes wrong and it's incredible that it does actually hang together at all, and buses do actually arrive more or less on time, and so on.

S: Sometimes you don't start appreciating things or people until you are deprived of them for a day or two. There was this great fuss not so long ago about sugar, you know, there wasn't, there was a shortage of sugar. And then coffee became very expensive. So things like this remind us from time to time, after all most things are laid on for us with absolutely clockwork regularity most of the time. All the time there's electricity. It may be there is the odd failure in the course of the year, for an hour or two, and how we grumble. But all the rest of the year it's on supply, it's on tap. Water - on tap all the time. Very rarely is there a burst main and we don't have any for an hour or two, or there's some repair work going on, so they turn it off. And again we grumble. But most of the time, you know, it's there. Same with food supply, same with transport. I mean, 99.9 percent of the time it's all there, and it's all supplied and it's all laid on. But, you know, we're not grateful.

Manjuvajra: Sewage is a thing I'm grateful for. (Laughter)

S: Yes. Otherwise, you know, we'd all be falling sick. Sewage disposal, you know, all the men who are doing that work, who maintain the sewers, this vast underground network under the streets of London. A whole underground city almost. Yes? With which some people, hundreds of people, maybe thousands, are quite familiar. They spend their whole working lives there. Inspecting and, you know, making sure everything's alright. Taking a pride in their work.

What about miners, you know, supplying coal? Most people don't think about the miners unless they go on strike! Well, you can't be thinking about all these people all the time, but at least some time, at least when you do your metta bhavana, perhaps you should remember them and be grateful. This is a great thing in Japanese Buddhism. In fact I believe, formerly at least, in Japanese culture generally - to be grateful for everything that you received. To bow, as it were, repeatedly, you know, as an expression of that - that gratitude.

Anyway, maybe that's enough on that particular point, We've one more Precept - 10 - ah, this is very relevant -

'The prime of youth, being the period of development of body, speech and mind, it would be a cause of regret to waste it in vulgar indifference'.

Indifference to what?

_____ : The Dharma.

S: The Dharma, the Spiritual Life. But what's the usual attitude? Is it like that?

_____ : (Inaudible)

Manjuvajra: Have a good time while you've got body, speech and mind.

Kulamitra: It's often worse than that - there often is just a general indifference nowadays, particularly with a lot of unemployed people who just become... don't care about (Inaudible)

S: Um? What do you say?

Siddhiratna: Apathetic.

S: Apathetic, yes.

Devamitra: Actually, I was really quite shocked sometimes when I'd go to talk to the City College to (unclear) and what have you just the degree of resignation, at such a young age, that they had, you know, a lot that they thought they were going to have and they couldn't see any way round it, didn't particularly want to see any way round it either. They took it for granted they were going to get married, have kids, have a house and a car, and that would be their lot. And they were only seventeen or eighteen.

S: This reminds me of something that Oscar Wilde says in one of his essays. He said Agitators are people who go down into some perfectly contented community and make them discontented. He said This is why agitators are absolutely necessary! (Laughter)

Devamitra: Yes, but I mean, they weren't contented, they were discontented, but resigned to it.

S: Yes, I think he meant contentment in the sense of resignation.

Devamitra: Ah, that's really good.

S: I think it's in the essay on The soul of man under socialism. It's quite a good essay from the evolutionary point of view.

Mangala: This implies though - I think this implies a very... the youth as being very much in touch with having very good sort of leaders or educators, or teachers. Otherwise, I mean, how can they be even concerned or even aware of developing body, speech and mind if the idea's never put to them in the first place.

S: Yes, well what is put to them? At the most, I mean, at the end of your period at school there's a careers officer waiting to interview you. That's about all the guidance you get, isn't it?

Mangala: (Inaudible)

S: Um?

Mangala: Even at school, school's just a, it's not really, it doesn't mean helping your mind or giving you any high ideals. It's just filling you up with information, basically.

S: Um. Yes. How do you find it with the youngsters who come along to Heruka? You seem to have a higher percentage of them than most Centres.

Ajita: As far as what? The difference do you mean?

S: From this point of view, yes.

Ajita: Ah, yeh. Um.

S: Well clearly they wouldn't be as indifferent as most, otherwise they wouldn't have come along at all. What do you infer about their contemporaries, as it were from what you see and what you know of them?

Ajita: I'm not too sure what you're asking.

S: Well, you know, Devamitra's talked about the atmosphere for young people. From those that you meet, say in Glasgow, do you get the impression that young people, on the whole are in fact like that - apathetic and resigned and not able to see any alternative to the job, you know, the family, the car, etc. for the next fifty or sixty years?

Ajita: I think it depends on where (unclear)

S: Um?

Ajita: There is that streak in them, of

S: No, do you infer from your contact with them, about the attitude of the generation to which they belong, that it is in fact like that?

Ajita: Um. I don't really think so, no. Not in Glasgow anyway.

S: So what are the alternatives for them, if they say miss the FWBO? What might they be thinking in terms of, to get out of that possible rut?

Ajita: Yeh. (Inaudible)

S: Um?

Ajita: I met one chap last week, and he was going to sea.

S: That's interesting. There used to be an outlet in the old days, you know, run away to sea or join the army, to see the world. Anyway, even the army's been reduced.

Ajita: A high degree of the British army are Glaswegians. They got in the army (unclear)

S: Um. Um. Apparently, according to some interviews, quite a lot of men in the army in Northern Ireland consider it quite a good life, quite interesting. A bit exciting.

Mangala: What do you think is meant by the 'prime of youth'? To me that sounds like 15 or 14 or something like that. I'm not quite sure if that's implied, or....

S: The prime of youth being the period of development of body, speech and mind. Alright, the whole being, the whole personality. So clearly, that period is being referred to, the period when body,

speech and mind reach their fullest development. So when would you say that was? In ordinary terms, leaving aside higher spiritual development.

Mangala: Probably, for the body, about eighteen.

S: In the case of a man it goes up to twenty-five. Take probably the mind too. I think a woman is generally supposed to complete her development more quickly than a man. For, say, in the case of young men, say up to the age of, what, twenty-five? Or in the case of women maybe up to the age of the early twenties. Even less, perhaps.

Siddhiratna: It seems if you.... there's kids in schools, and things like that, round about fifteen or sixteen, who are very, sort of, idealistic. I think that they're sixteen and seventeen, they're becoming aware of ideals and the possibilities etc., not in the sense of an alternative society, but just that they're entertaining philosophical notions and metaphysical notions.

S: It's almost as though one needs to be able to make contact with them at that time. We're not really doing that very much, are we, apart from Heruka perhaps. Maybe the odd one at Vajradhatu.

Devamitra: I've been talking to kids in schools....

S: Or Aryatara. But do they - some of them come along perhaps?

Devamitra: A group of them booked and they didn't turn up but I think that was because their teacher came. We've got a couple of schoolboys coming along who are sixteen.

Mangala: A couple in Brighton, as well. We've got fifteen year old Rick!

S: Oh, that's really good, yes. I think Aryatara's got one or two.

Subhuti: We get quite a lot in the E.E.M.C.

S: That's a good sign. I think we should anyway, sort of, try to get younger and younger people.

Ajita: I suppose you need a couple of really young people who are really into it, so when other young people come ...

S: At least very lively people say in their early twenties. Not too remote from them in age, because teenagers tend to think you're old at twenty-five, don't they?

Ajita: They're more likely to stick about if they see other young kids, maybe sixteen or seventeen. I think if they realise it's for young people too - Buddhism. It isn't puritanical or....

Devamitra: I think, actually, that the people that I've talked to in schools are a bit more idealistic, and have got a few more ideas, but when I said that people were rather resigned I meant the people specifically around the City College doing apprenticeships and things like that. The other people I've talked to have been in sixth forms and maybe are considering higher education, and you get a different feel from that, so I think you can sort of distinguish between them.

S: Well people whose education stops earlier, the other factors being equal, are trapped earlier, and settle down more early, don't they? They often marry earlier, don't they?

Siddhiratna: They actually grow older (unclear)

S: Um. Yes. Right. Yes.

Ajita: It depends on luck really, doesn't it? It's luck to see a poster in a street, lucky if you hear mention in a conversation.

S: But this is one of the reasons I feel our publicity should be as wide as possible. Because the more widespread your publicity, the more likely the accidents are to happen. Someone may see who might otherwise have never come in contact with you.

Kulamitra: Should we not think in terms, perhaps, of getting some sort of lively, informative package together for schools? I know we've got the outline but I think the schools tend to go in now for a more, sort of, multimedia approach.

S: Ah, right, I know what you mean, yeh. Yeh. I think we should.

_____: You talked about this once before didn't you, the Magpies.

Vajradaka: The Magpies?

_____: Yeh, it's a folder with.....

Vajradaka: Jackdaws. Jackdaws. (Laughter)

Devamitra: Actually, someone really should write another schools thing, because the one I wrote is really hopelessly inadequate. It was just originally a stop-gap anyway.

S: Well you're the man, you're the teacher, the educationalist. Do you feel like it?

Manjuvajra: Yeh, I would like it.

S: Not a very big thing, after all.

Manjuvajra: It's something I could do (Inaudible).

Siddhiratna: This was talked about a long time ago, but nothing's ever come out of it.

S: Maybe you should take it up then.

Siddhiratna: With diagrams and stuff like that.

S: Yeh, right, yeh. Make it interesting.

Vajradaka: Even something that could be used by someone who went to a school and maybe could do it on a sort of study group kind of level.

S: Um. Yeh.

Subhuti: The other possibility is getting a film made. It might be possible to get a company to sponsor a film. They use educational (unclear)

S: I'd like to mention in this connection a sort of *miccha-ditthi*. That that is, you know, before you're really ready for spiritual life, you need to explore the whole gamut of worldly experiences. Yeh? Um? Do you see what I mean? I mean, there's a very small element of truth in this, which I'm sure

you can appreciate, but in the way that it's usually put it is in fact a *miccha-ditthi*. As though that worldly experience constitutes in itself a sort of step on the spiritual path that has to be gone through. Do you see what I mean? So that if you haven't, for instance, had lots of sex and lots of affairs, and relationships, and haven't got drunk a lot, and haven't travelled a lot - well, you know, you ought to do all those things before getting on with your spiritual development, because if you haven't, you know, you've missed out on a certain stage of development and you won't be able to make any real progress. You get the sort of attitude I mean?

Sona: It may also come from the fact that people see the spiritual life as sort of all uphill and, you know, they have to give up, and not really enjoy, and they want to enjoy themselves first.

S: Well that could be the rationalisation. Yeh? But actually the *miccha-ditthi* consists in regarding all that almost as though it was an actual stage of spiritual development, and that therefore you shouldn't miss out on it.

Mangala: Doesn't it also arise too, from the idea that if you do get involved in the spiritual life, therefore you can't have any sex any more, and you can't do this and you can't do that. People almost feel afraid perhaps that, you know, they think oh well if that's what I'm going to do, well it means that I won't have any more sex or get drunk or anything like that.

S: Well that might be a *miccha-ditthi*, but it's a different one. Maybe an opposite one.

Siddhiratna: Isn't there something, Bhante, in a sense that if one is going to become disillusioned with worldliness etc., you need at least some notion, some experience, I'm not saying that you need to go through the motions, or complete all the experiences, you need to at least see it.

S: Oh you certainly need the notion, but the argument sometimes is that you don't really know what you're giving up unless you experience it. Yeh? Fully.

Siddhiratna: Unless you take it fully.

S: Yes. But I think you can give it up without having experienced it.

Kulamitra: In a way, if you can see through your parents you can see through the world.

Sagaramati: What is it that's the element of truth? You said there's an element of truth in it.

S: Well you do need to be a sort of human being before you start trying to be a super-human being. But that sort of very extensive experience of that kind is not necessarily part of your development as a human being.

Siddhiratna: I think travel - you listed travel as one of the things you probably don't need to do, but I've got a feeling that travel.... I always felt that when I went abroad to Pakistan when I was about twenty, and before that my father or my father didn't actually go but my grandfather went away to war, and young men would go away and see other parts of the world and see other human

S: I don't think it's a necessary thing in the sense that, oh you've got to do it before you can start thinking in terms of serious spiritual development. No.

Siddhiratna: I found it was very useful, though, to actually go away.....

S: Well it might well be useful, but I don't see it as an indispensable stage of development.

Mangala: It's a bit of an artificial split. In a way, it's not that you have to give up all - what am I trying to say? - it's not that you have to go through certain things, but maybe an interest in spiritual matters should also be just as much on a young person's programme as an interest in getting drunk and pop music etc. etc. so that it's not really a matter of excluding one or the other or having to go through something but well he's interested in spiritual things as well. He has an awareness of those. That doesn't preclude having interest in other things as well. He may be naturally more drawn to one than to the other.

S: Even though one, in the long run, may, you know, exclude the other if you want to develop to any degree of depth. If you were really into meditation, well at the beginning if you were just a young teenager, maybe you could go along to the odd meditation class and also get drunk occasionally, but if you wanted to really get into meditation and do it regularly, you quickly discover, well it wasn't compatible with getting drunk even once a week.

Mangala: I think that this could put people off. I think people do have the idea - this is what we were talking about yesterday - that if you get into the spiritual life it means you don't have any pleasure any more, and if you're a young person, well, you're probably going to think very hard about that, and probably think well.....

S: Well then it means presenting the spiritual life as much more pleasurable than the worldly life, and showing yourself, I mean, by your own attitude that it is so. Yeh? But you know, the sort of case I have in mind is where someone maybe is quite a mature sort of healthy sort of young person, but maybe not with much worldly experience, as some old cynic says 'Ah, you've got to have this experience and that experience and then you can think in terms of spiritual development'. Yeh? That those things represent a stage that you've got to go through. I don't really agree with that at all.

Mangala: It's as if spiritual development somehow excludes an interest and an awareness of other more worldly activities.

S: Well it excludes involvement in them in a certain respect, doesn't it?

Mangala: Yeh. Perhaps involvement to some extent, but, I mean I feel I'm much more aware of these kind of things now than.....

S: Well awareness is a different matter - to be aware of things. You can be aware that there are wars going on, without getting actually involved in fighting yourself.

Manjuvajra: What are some of the things you think you definitely would have to not get involved in? Things that maybe some of us now are involved with, that you feel would have to be dropped. Things that we're involved in that we feel are perfectly alright at the moment, but at a later stage we might start to question.

S: Well, for instance, supposing you are in the habit of reading the newspaper every morning. Yeh? Or supposing you were in the habit of having the odd drink. After a while you would find that your sensitivity, or the sensitivity of your system was such, you couldn't even have a single drink. Not because of any sort of principle - you just couldn't do it. You know, your system wouldn't stand it - it just makes you too uncomfortable, at least, even if not ill. Yeh? Whereas, you know, for the time being it might be quite alright to do so. You don't actually get drunk, your judgement is not disturbed, the drink does you no harm. But later on you might find, well you just can't do it. Yeh? I'm thinking more in that sort of way.

But as I was saying the *miccha-ditthi* I'm really concerned with at the moment is this, that a sort of variety of experiences which are really quite inimical to the spiritual life, are presented as a sort of

necessary stage of development in the interests of a sort of so-called maturity. Yes?

Siddhiratna: Do you think this is actually occurring within the FWBO?

S: Oh yes, I've heard this. These things have been said in my hearing.

Devamitra: I have actually overheard another Order member saying, oh that Order member, he was told before he was ordained.....

S: He was what?

Devamitra: He was told before he was ordained that you couldn't really get into the spiritual life until you were thirty.

S: Oh. Ah. Well it doesn't depend upon age at all.

Devamitra: Yeh, I know, but I mean, just an example of the sort of thing.

S: As if saying, well until you're sufficiently mature, as in a worldly sense, you're not qualified for spiritual life.

Devamitra: I don't know how general that is, but that was other Order members saying that.

Siddhiratna: That's a *miccha-ditthi*.

S: Oh yes, I mean, after all, you know, you can get into spiritual life at any age. It's never too early, it's never too late - fortunately. But the earlier the better because the conditioning is less, the rigidity is less, the openness is more easily.

Sagaramati: What about things like, in the case of Ratnajyoti where (Inaudible due to crashing crockery sounds!), but I mean it seemed to be something that he should have wanted to do before he was ordained.

S: Ah, this is what I was referring to as the ordinary human maturity.

Sagaramati: Do you think it means, say like a fifty, or a sixty year old can have that ordinary human maturity?

S: I think sufficient ordinary human maturity for it to be practical for them to think in terms of actual spiritual development, yes I think they can, I think they can, undoubtedly. I think that the trouble is they're usually distracted by other influences and therefore miss out on the possibility of spiritual development, perhaps indefinitely. Yeh? I'm quite sure that there are people of fifteen or sixteen who are sufficiently healthy and aware and who could go directly into spiritual development under favourable circumstances, by-passing completely what is usually regarded as worldly life. They don't have to get married, they don't have to have worldly jobs. The positive counterparts of all those things they can find within the FWBO, or soon will if they can't find them now. A positive counterpart of a job certainly is to be found within the FWBO in the form of working in our way. The positive counterpart of getting married is certainly to be found in the form of the spiritual fellowship. Yeh? And so on.

Devamitra: Would you say (inaudible) really that a pre-requisite for someone to be ordained is that they have achieved this what you term the worldly human maturity?

S: Yes. Yeh.

Devamitra: Which Ratnajyoti obviously didn't have?

S: I don't know. I did say that, but I don't know whether that really represents my considered view. I think probably it doesn't. I'd need to talk to him and to others a lot more, you know, before coming to a definitive conclusion. But I certainly did wonder, you know, whether it was not a sort of delayed adolescence. Or it could be just regressive, because when one experiences difficulties, one does tend to regress to something which, you know, previously one did find satisfactory.

Vajradaka: Does this human maturity that you just mentioned correspond to the kind of psychological balance, a sort of psychological maturity?

S: Um. It's difficult to say. Psychological maturity can mean many things, some of which only come with experience, not necessarily just worldly experience. I mean a certain aliveness. One can't expect even a quite mature young person to be too balanced. You know? They're quite susceptible or impressionable and it's good that they should be. And therefore it's all the more important that the influences that are brought to bear upon us should be really good, positive influences that, you know, encourage them and help them to grow, rather than otherwise.

Vajradaka: Because I've been thinking about this quite a bit, with respect to ordination, and in, sort of thinking about it, you know, if the criteria for a person being ordained would mean that just at a kind of a psychological level, that they were quite, sort of, integrated, and reasonably mature, that the standard or criteria for ordination is going up.

S: Well that would be according to the Path of Regular Steps, but sometimes it happens that people are not very, sort of, balanced in a way. Certainly with problems. But at the same time there's a definite spiritual aspiration which certainly can't be ignored or denied. It isn't always quite straightforward and cut and dried.

Vajradaka: But can that aspiration really be linked to commitment? Can it be said to be the same thing as commitment? Can it, in a sense, can you make such a hard line between commitment and aspiration?

S: Hmm. In order to consolidate your aspiration into real commitment, you would need to be reasonably balanced, I think. Thought it's a very, sort of, moot or debatable point. Difficult to generalise. I do see the individual person in each case before really being able to say very much. But sometimes it's possible to have someone who's really committed in his heart, as it were, but he's so unreliable and unbalanced that you just can't depend upon him, if he finds it difficult to actualise or embody his commitment, even though he is committed. So one can't help, you know, recognising that sort of possibility. It makes it quite difficult for others.

Siddhiratna: It would still be worth ordaining that person.

S: It might be. It would depend on the situation. If the situation in which he was going to live would be a very supportive one, like a good Community, well, one might consider it. If he was going to stay on living on his own, somewhere out in the wilds, or in some other country, well, one might think, No, it just isn't on, it wouldn't be possible. One would have to see the individual case.

Mangala: Why wouldn't it be possible?

S: I mean, unless we're discussing an individual instance, it's very difficult to say. But broadly, he'd

need a lot of support from other people to help him, you know, become more balanced, and therefore actualise his commitment in a regular way. He wouldn't be able to do it on his own.

Anyway, I think we - oh, yes, we've gone over time. So this is the tenth and last of the Ten Causes of Regret. 'The prime of youth being the period of development of the body, speech and mind, it would be a cause of regret to waste it in vulgar indifference.' You've got all that energy, you've got all that inspiration, if you like; you've got all that youthful idealism, you just fritter it away, instead of putting it to the best possible use, in a way that will really benefit you and give you a really positive, happy kind of life. So the younger the better.

Alright, maybe we'd better leave it there because lunch is being served.

END OF SEMINAR

*Originally transcribed and typed in the 1970's by Upasaka Nityananda
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