

## Sangharakshita In Seminar

### *[CONDITIONS OF COMMUNAL STABILITY and]* **CONDITIONS OF THE STABILITY OF THE ORDER**

**[Weekend study in 1979 in Wellington - New Zealand]**

**Those Present:** Keith Downer (now Dharmadhara) Udaya, Purna, Achala, Megha, Jennine, Geoff Byng, Ian Allen (two others, not identified)

**Sangharakshita:** Ready? Alright then we'll be doing the section on 'Conditions of Communal Stability', which is quite an important one. And we'll do what we usually do: we'll go round the circle, taking it in turns to read a paragraph, and then talk about the paragraph, talk about any particular points which arise.

Here you will notice that this first section - 'Conditions of Communal Stability' - is sort of introductory, so we can just read through that, and add a few explanatory comments, and then we can go straight on to the section proper, which deals with the 'Conditions for the Stability of the Order. So can someone start on the left, and read 'The Conditions of Communal Stability'.

*[TEXT from "Some Sayings of the Buddha" P.68  
(Oxford University Press Paperback edition)]*

### *THE STABILITY OF SOCIETIES*

#### *CONDITIONS OF COMMUNAL STABILITY*

*Now at that time the venerable Ananda was standing behind the Exalted One and fanning him. And the Exalted One said to the venerable Ananda:*

*'How now, Ananda? Have you ever heard that the Vajjians repeatedly assemble together and in large numbers?'*

*'I have heard so, Lord.'*

*'Well, Ananda, so long as the Vajjians shall assemble repeatedly and in large numbers, just so long may the prosperity of the Vajjian's be looked for and not their decay.*

*. . . So long, Ananda, as the Vajjians assemble in harmony and disperse in harmony: so long as they do their business in harmony: so long as they introduce no revolutionary ordinance, or break up no established ordinance, but abide by the old-time Vajjian Norm, as ordained: so long as they honour, reverence, esteem, and worship the elders among the Vajjians and deem them worthy of listening to: so long, as the women and maidens of the families dwell without being forced or abducted: so long as they honour, revere, esteem, and*

*worship the Vajjian shrines, both the inner and the outer: so long as they allow not the customary offerings, given and performed, to be neglected: so long as the customary watch and ward over the Arahants that are among them is well kept, so that they may have free access to the realm and having entered may dwell pleasantly therein: just so long as they do these things, Ananda, may the prosperity of the Vajjians be looked for and not their decay.'*

*Digha Nikaya ii. 73*

**S:** Alright. First of all a few words about the Vajjians. Does everyone know who these Vajjians were?

**Purna:** Were they the tribal kingdom in the delta between the Jumna and the main Ganges?

S: I don't know if they were. They were tribal, but they weren't a kingdom. They had a republican form of government. It is important to remember that, in the Buddha's day, politically, India was divided into kingdoms and republics, and there were a number of kingdoms and a number of republics at that time. And the important fact of the reign of the time of the Buddha, (unclear) speaking, was that the kingdoms were increasing and swallowing up the republics. And in particular the kingdom of Magadha was swallowing up the republic. And at that time the king of Magadha, the ruler of Magadha, was Ajattasatru (unclear). was thinking of incorporating the Vajjian republic into the kingdom of Magadha. So he sent one of his ministers to call upon the Buddha, and to try to find out indirectly whether the Buddha thought the enterprise would be successful. But the Buddha did not reply directly, and he made, to Ananda, the remarks which are given here, which suggested to the king, Ajattasatru, that perhaps the king would not be successful. Later on, unfortunately, the king was successful, I think, after the Buddha's death, after the Parinirvana, and the kingdom of Magadha continued to expand, until, of course, the time of Ashoka, when the kingdom of Magadha was practically coterminous with the (unclear) of India.

But anyway all that was in the future. So the Buddha was laying down, in this particular passage, what the translator calls 'conditions of communal stability.' So the Buddha, having laid down those conditions of communal stability, having indicated the conditions under which the Vajjis (?) were likely to retain their independence, went on to develop the theme and apply it to the Sangha; to apply it to the Order; to apply it to the Spiritual community, in a sort of parallel fashion. So this suggests that there is a sort of parallel, if you like, up to a point, between what we sometimes call the 'positive group' and what we call the 'spiritual community'. Do you see what I'm getting at?

The Vajjis, the tribal republic of the Vajjis, represent a sort of positive group, and the Buddha is talking about the conditions of communal stability (i.e. of the stability of positive groups), but then he goes on to talk about conditions of the stability of the Order (i.e. of spiritual communities). So there is a parallel between the two, but only up to a point.

So this weekend we are concerned more about the conditions of the stability of the Order, that is to say : the spiritual community, and not so much with conditions of communal stability (i.e. stability of the positive group). But it is important to notice the parallel between the two, and also to understand **the difference** between the two. This is, perhaps, **vitally important**. So maybe we can talk about that for a little bit before we go on to conditions of stability of the Order, and also, maybe, make a few comments on some particular points mentioned by the Buddha as conducive to communal stability.

But first of all this difference, or distinction between the positive group and the spiritual community : **It is very, very important to understand this within the context of the FWBO**, otherwise there

can be lots of misunderstanding and confusion.

So what do you think is the main difference between the positive group and the spiritual community?

**Ian Allen:** The word `spiritual'.

**S:** The word `spiritual'. What (unclear) understand by that?

**Ian A:** The positive group is not necessarily spiritual, although they might be positive.

**S:** What exactly does one mean by `positive'?

**Ian A:** Ah .....

**S:** Positive what?

**Purna:** Setting up conditions that are in fact `breeding' people for - individuals for - the spiritual life.

**S:** Mm. Or even if not `breeding' at least **permitting** - at least permitting. In a way the positive group **cannot `breed' individuals**; cannot `breed' the spiritual community, because the positive group as such doesn't know anything about the spiritual community; but at least it can be open to some sort of development or possibility beyond itself; and this is, in fact, made provision for by the Buddha. He says : *"So long as the customary watch and ward over the Arahants that are among them is well-kept, so that they may have free access to the realm and having entered may dwell pleasantly therein : just so long as they do these things, Ananda, may the prosperity of the Vajjians be looked for and not their decay."*

One mustn't take the term `Arahant' here, too literally. `Arahants' means `the spiritually worthy ones', the True Individuals you might say. So the positive group has got to be aware at least, of the existence of `Individuals', let's say, and make arrangements for them. In other words, make it possible for them to live as Individuals. Do you see what I'm getting at?

So, even though the group cannot make any arrangements to `breed' Individuals, it can, at least, permit them to live; at least permit them to move about when they've succeeded in making themselves Individuals, with the help of their spiritual friends.

So the positive group must be open-ended with regard to the possibility of Individuals, and the possibility of the spiritual community. It must permit the spiritual community to exist. **So it does this by not claiming to possess the Individual totally**, which is, of course, the tendency in modern times : for the corporate state to claim to possess the Individual more and more - his time, his energy, his money, his everything! So you can hardly get away from the stranglehold of the corporate state.

So the Buddha is saying here, that the group, even the `positive group', must permit the Individual as such to exist. This is what it really means : A `positive group' is not really a `positive group' unless it permits the Individual as such, to exist. This is putting it in more general terms. If the positive group to which you belong - if the corporate state to which you belong - does not permit you to function freely as an individual (I mean a true individual) , where it places so many restrictions on your movements and your free exercise of your true individuality, however good, however great the material facilities may be (the material side of living), it's not really a positive group. You're just `a bird in a gilded cage'!

**Ian A:** This is the difference between a democracy and a totalitarian state.

**S:** Well, this is putting it weakly. [Laughter] Unfortunately the democratic state, the social democratic state itself, these days, has many corporate features, almost totalitarian features, which, unfortunately, we're beginning to get used to.

**VOICES:** Yes!

**S:** So we have to be a little bit careful here, and not assume that in states nominally democratic, there is untrammelled, individual freedom - No! This is particularly on my mind these days, because in England they've revised the operation of the blasphemy laws. In fact they're tightening them up! So, in that respect, we're having **less freedom** than we thought we had. So we have to watch the so-called 'democracies'!

We all know that : "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance". And that should not ever be forgotten! But it is part of the positivity of the positive group that it, as it were, 'permits' the individual to be an Individual within its framework, and does not try to take him over and control him completely. So this is very important.

**Geoffrey Byng:** In the Pali scriptures where it says 'Arahant', should we take that to mean the four grades of spiritually developed person, or just anybody with (unclear)?

**S:** Well, yes and no. Yes and no. Because the important thing to (unclear) in the Pali scriptures a sort of process of hardening went on with regard to a lot of the terms, which at the beginning seemed to have been used in a rather, I wouldn't say 'loose' way, but in a rather liberal way, not very technically; but later they assumed a technical significance, a technical meaning, which became increasingly rigid.

Well, we know that the term 'Arahant' was used in pre-Buddhistic times, and it simply meant 'worthy', 'worshipful', much as we say in English, 'His Worship the Mayor'. It was used in that sort of way. Then it came to mean sort of 'morally worthy', 'ethically worthy', 'spiritually worthy'; and then it came to be used more and more for the one who had attained complete spiritual worth - was the worthiest of all, spiritually speaking; or what you would call an Arahant with a capital 'A', so to speak.

And usage in the Pali scriptures fluctuates. For instance, there's one passage I remember where a whole party of Bhikkhus is seen approaching the Buddha, including Devadatta, and the Buddha, as far as I recollect, says : 'Look! Here come the Arahants.' Well, Devadatta wasn't an Arahant in the technical sense, was he? So clearly, the Buddha, (or whoever it was speaking - I think it was the Buddha) - must have been using the word 'Arahant' in a quite general way, **not** in the specific sense that the term later acquired - 'Look here come the worthy ones', speaking, perhaps, in a polite sort of way. So we have to bear this in mind, as I said, that some of the terms used in the Pali scriptures have a sort of earlier, more general sense, and a later more sort of technical sense. And it isn't always quite clear in which sense the term is being used. Sometimes it sort of fluctuates. But in any case we must always just try to get the spirit of what is being said, and not try to tie it down too literally, not to say literalistically - not be too rigid.

The basic difference, of course, between the positive group and the spiritual community is that the positive group, positive though it is, and here 'positive' means mainly 'emotionally positive', - the positive group does not consist of Individuals, whereas the spiritual community does; but, at least, the positive group permits the development and growth of Individuals and does not obstruct them in

any way. It gives them free access, so to speak. It allows them to come, and it allows them to go. So the positive group should be open-ended with regards the spiritual community.

**Achala:** Do you think there is any difference in the sort of past structure of the positive group?

**S:** Well, it is of significance that the Vajjians were a republic. It has been suggested that the Buddha, in a sense, almost modelled the Sangha on the republican tribes. Perhaps one shouldn't make too much of that fact. I think, perhaps, in some cases, too much has been made of it; but still it has its significance. The Buddha did not function in a dictatorial sort of fashion himself. At the very least the Sangha was a limited 'monarchy', not an absolute monarchy, or a constitutional monarchy - not a spiritual dictatorship. The Buddha made this very clear.

There was certainly a sort of parallel between the structure of the positive group, - in this case the republic - and the structure of the Sangha. In the republics every citizen had a voice in affairs; similarly in the Sangha. Every individual monk had a voice in affairs. He had to be present for valid decisions to be taken. But it is also significant that mention is made of the (unclear) Arahants, because one can say, in a sense, that even though the positive group as such is not aware, really, of the existence of the spiritual community as such - (for a group member cannot really appreciate the significance of individuality, or, perhaps, even recognise a 'true individual' fully and completely) - the existence of the spiritual community is necessary to the existence of the positive group. Do you see this? To have a really positive group you need to have some contact with 'individuals' even though you can't fully appreciate those 'individuals'.

**Achala:** The positive group would appreciate them to some extent.

**S:** To some extent, up to a point, but not completely; or, perhaps, appreciate them **theoretically**, but not have any **real** feeling for what it was all about - for what individuality was all about.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Would they appreciate their individuality ..... appreciate them as individuals but maybe ? .....

**S:** Well, they would see them as very positive people at the very least. At least they'd appreciate their extreme positivity, or extreme **emotional** positivity, but they might not be able to see very much beyond that. But unless you've got a few genuine 'individuals' sort of sustaining the positive group, the positive group itself, it seems, ceases to exist. It becomes more and more an ordinary group governed by ordinary considerations, whereas the presence within the positive group of at least a few 'individuals' keeps it relatively 'open' and therefore positive.

**Ian A:** Keeps it alive to new ideas etc. Keeps it open.

**S:** Yes. Right.

**Purna:** That seems related to the FWBO communities: that I've often thought that the success of communities is directly dependent on the number of Order members .....

**S:** Ah! Mm.

**Purna:** ..... and how much those Order members are aspiring individuals.

**S:** Yes. This is a very definite sort of parallel here. Sometimes I say the FWBO as such represents the positive group, and the Order members the spiritual community; and the Centres are places where

they meet, - and communities - as we've seen again and again in England.

If you've just got a community simply of `Mitras', well, it may start off quite positively; or even say a community of - 'Friends', let's make it a bit more obvious - : if you've got a community of `Friends' with no Order members living in the community you notice that there's a gradual slipping away. That community of `Friends' may start off very positively, but then you'll find they may start slacking off. Maybe one or two of them stop going to the Centre. Maybe they resent this. Or one or two of them leave, and just to fill up the community other people not connected with the FWBO at all are allowed in, and then the whole thing starts slipping and it ceases to be a community of any sort - in any sense!

**Udaya:** It's a sort of progressive compromise.

**S:** Mm. But if there are Order members living in that community, who are in contact with other Order members, then that is very much less likely to happen. If they are really actively committed Order members it just won't happen. So in that sense the presence of the spiritual community is necessary to keep even the positive group going. This is very important! Sometimes, of course, it's felt that in communities you need a sort of balance of Order members and `Mitras' and Friends. This is not to say you can't have communities consisting entirely of Order members, of course you can! If you're going to have both, or if there's a number of (non?)-Order members, it should be properly balanced. If you've got just one Order member and say eight or ten non-Order members it may be too much of a struggle for that one Order member. Do you see what I mean? The imbalance becomes too much. On the other hand if you've got - and we've sometimes had this - eight or nine Order members and two Friends or Mitras [loud laughter] the poor Friends and Mitras feel completely crushed, and you're not going to raise their voices: it's a bit too much for them. Do you see what I mean?

So there has to be a sort of proper balance. Sometimes we've found that half-and-half is not so bad. Suppose you have ten people, four Order members and six Mitras and Friends - say three Mitras and three Friends - that is quite a nice sort of balance. That seems to work very well. But these other proportions I've mentioned don't work very well. So this is quite interesting, because, within the Movement, you see reflected in miniature the whole question of the relationship between the positive group and the spiritual community. And the one, up to a point, provides a sort of parallel for the other. They have, up to a point, a sort of parallel structure as the Buddha himself seems to have clearly seen.

**Ian A:** Is there any danger, do you think, of a community completely of Order members almost being top-heavy, if you like, with a clash between the individual personalities? Do you think it needs Mitras and Friends to sort of tone it down?

**S:** No! I wouldn't say that. I would say that if you got a community of all Order members, **assuming them all to be genuinely Order members**, everything would just become more and more intensified.

**Ian A:** (unclear) **genuinely** Order members, it would be O.K. Maybe (unclear) it requires (unclear) .. it probably doesn't happen though.

**S:** Well, even among Order members there are differences. People may not see things precisely in the same way. There are certainly temperamental differences, but differences will not **make** a difference. And even if there were any differences of opinion they would be thrashed out quite openly. Nothing will be hidden; nothing will be suppressed or repressed.

**Udaya:** The differences like that don't really change anything fundamental between the people.

**S:** No. No.

**Udaya:** Yeah. It really comes down to relating on the basis that you have far more in common than you have not in common.

**S:** Yes. I think it is important to recognise that there are personality differences in the sense of having differences of temperament. ('Temperament' may be the more appropriate term here). But too much importance should not be given to these differences. People of different temperaments can be equally committed, and people with different ways of doing things - different approaches - can be equally committed. People don't have to have temperaments which are the same as theirs, or congenial with theirs: they can be quite different from you, but equally committed; and you can still, on the basis of your common commitment, work and function together. You don't necessarily have to be of the same temperament in order to be able to work together.

Sometimes people of complementary temperaments get along together, work along together, particularly well. You should take it as a sort of challenge. How dull it would be if you lived in a world where everybody had the same temperament as you, and the same interests. If you (unclear); if you collected stamps they collected stamps etc. That would really be quite dull.

**Udaya:** I think a good bit of healthy tension really does get sort of results .....

**S:** For instance, you know the Rotary Club principle, don't you? Has anyone belonged to the Rotary Club? [Hoot of laughter]. They have in each of their local branches, - or whatever they call them - one person from each occupation or profession. They take one doctor, one lawyer, one grocer, one .... (I've run out of occupations) .... [Laughter] ..... One dentist .... and when they meet together they have a variety of experience and a variety of outlooks to pool, as it were, but presumably -(I know nothing about the Rotarian principles) - but presumably they are all united on the basis of their Rotarian principles, at least to the extent of eating a monthly dinner together. So it's rather like that. If you have people of different temperaments, different interests, different abilities, it gives a sort of spice to the community, and it becomes more interesting, and you can learn from one another. You spark off one another. You may clash a little bit, just because you do see things differently, but that's good; that keeps you alive; that keeps you on your toes, prevents self-satisfaction, prevents self-complacency, enlarges your knowledge, enlarges your sphere of sympathy and experience. So that's all to the good.

So I think, far from just sort of tolerating these sort of differences of temperament, we should rejoice in them and welcome them. It's good! It shows the infinite variety of human nature. Shakespeare says about Cleopatra: "Age cannot wither her nor custom stale her infinite variety." Well, that applies to the whole human race in its infinite variety. So one should rejoice in it rather than wanting just to surround yourself with people who are very similar to you. If everybody in the community was quiet, well, how dull that would make it; if everybody was noisy and (unclear), how dreadful that would be ... [Laughter] .... But if there are some who are quiet, and some who are talkative etc. etc. that makes for a balanced community, and a healthier harmonious community life. It's just like an orchestra: you've got different instruments playing different things but it all adds up to one piece of music. So it should be rather like that. Think of the spiritual community as a sort of orchestra: some people are like the trumpets ..... [Loud laughter] ..... and other are like the double-basses; you get the little flute of course ... [words drowned by laughter] ..... just like that.

**Udaya:** Unfortunately what happens sometimes is that you get people in a spiritual community or -

I'm thinking in terms of a 'live-in' spiritual community and not necessarily true individuals - and they're in that situation because there's a bit of them that really does want to get on with it and grow, but often you come across people who are not inspired enough or interested enough to really want to work through difficulties and to really want to be told where their difficult areas are, and when you do point it out to them, or if someone is approaching them with some problem or difficulty in communication they just close off; they don't really want to see it, or they just ignore it .....

**S:** Well, this raises the whole question of the initial basis of selection of the spiritual community. I mean of a community, let's say.

**Udaya:** I think it's something quite crucial that .....

**S:** If you feel that someone is as closed and resistant, and as reluctant as that, perhaps you should consider whether to have him in the community at all, especially if you haven't got a really good (unclear) to the community in the form of the spiritual community, that is the presence of the Order in that community. (When you have (unclear) a spiritually strong community, that is to say a community with a real spiritual community as its nucleus, you can afford to have an odd difficult or resistant person; but if it's a weak community struggling to get itself together you have to be, perhaps, much more careful.

**Udaya:** Mm. It seems to work out that if a person is not pulling in the same direction, if they're even just sort of neutral, there tends to be pulling in the opposite direction.

**S:** Well, yes; because every 'individual', inverted commas, has weight, so to speak, so if someone is not making an effort within the community, not making an effort to grow, he is sort of dead weight. He doesn't even have to oppose you: the fact that he is not making an effort means that he is opposing you, because he is going to the opposite direction. In a way, it would be better if he actively opposed you. He would be clear, and he would be more in contact with you; but if he just doesn't make an effort - he gets up late in the morning, doesn't go to meditation, doesn't bother about study, etc. etc. well, he is a drag, a sort of dead weight on the community. He doesn't need to do anything more than just not participate, or not co-operate. He doesn't have to be an aggressive or challenging kind of person - that's not necessary. He's just a dull, dead weight like a heavy lump of clay clogging the whole thing!

**Udaya:** I remember - I think it might have been in one of the Brighton lectures - you were talking about the FWBO and the fact that we don't have a membership. You were talking about a 'Friend' who is a member who comes along regularly and is an active member, and then you said, "Well, really there is no other kind other than an active member."

**S:** Yes. But of course one recognises that there are degrees of activity. [**Udaya:** And different ways.] .... And different ways of being active.

There are one or two other points from this introductory section: "*So long as they honour, revere, esteem and worship the Vajjian shrines, both the inner and the outer: so long as they allow not the customary offerings, given and performed, to be neglected:....*" What do you think this means? Or what do you think it corresponds to in our modern life, in our modern society?

**Keith Downer** (now Dharmadhara): So long as they have some spiritual aspirations or practices.

**S:** No. I wouldn't say it went as far as that. What were these Vajjian shrines? We don't really know

very much about them, but there are references to them. They seem to have been shrines to local deities, local spirits, with offerings of flowers, fruits and cakes.

**Udaya:** Maybe a more modern Western parallel would be something like being ecology-conscious, and maintaining something like arts and sciences - art galleries.

**S:** Ah! I think it would relate to the cultural.....

[**Udaya** and others: Yeah!] ..... cultural activities which also help to maintain the positive group. These have their place. In fact, in the case of some, more highly developed cultural activities it is difficult to say where they end and where the spiritual life begins.

In the case of the very best poetry, the very best music, it verges on the spiritual, and, perhaps, it passes completely over into it. So cultural activities are very important. I think this is what the Buddha is getting at here.

(unclear) culture was not really very much developed in those days. As far as we know there were no fine arts, no paintings, certainly not much in the way of music, and certainly nothing in the way of literature; but the Buddha refers to these customary observances which might have been very colourful, especially the seasonal or periodic observances. Maybe in those days it was more on the level of folk culture, like dancing round the maypole, and all that sort of thing; but still, it is fine arts in embryo, as it were.

**Ian A:** It says "inner and outer" ....?

**S:** I'm not sure what that means. It might mean the shrines within the city and the shrines outside, or it might be that within the shrine itself, which was very simple anyway, as far as we know, there was a division of inner and outer. This is not very clear.

**Ian A:** You don't think he means something when he says 'inner' like within the person?

**S:** No. I don't think that at all. 'Shrine' - the original word is 'caitya', the 'caitya'. They're often referred to in the Pali literature, and they're the sort of thing that you still get in India. They're still part of popular Hinduism. It isn't necessarily a structure: a tree which is regarded as a sort of sacred tree may be referred to as a 'caitya'. Or it may be a little sort of wayside shrine just two or three feet high, with just a little chamber inside, perhaps with a crude image, perhaps with just a stone smeared with vermilion, a sort of 'lucky stone', something of that sort; or it may be a grove of trees. All these were regarded as 'caityas'. Or it might be a cave which was believed to be inhabited by a spirit - again, that would be a 'caitya'. Though 'caitya' is usually, at least sometimes, considered to be a sort of mound or heap, a sort of cairn, which later on became a stupa. This could even be quite small - a little heap of stones - something of that sort.

So the keeping of the traditional observances, these sort of folk-culture observances, the Buddha regarded as essential to communal stability; partly because they form a common heritage, a common tradition, which helps bind people together, but also because they represent a sort of refinement of people's feelings and emotions, and point the way towards the development of a fine arts which are directly connected with the spiritual life.

There are one or two things here, of course, which are not very much in accordance with modern Western ideas, for instance: not introducing any revolutionary ordinance. This suggests that things were all right as they are. And perhaps it is possible to attain a sort of positive group structure that does not need any sort of tinkering about with, or tampering with. Perhaps that is possible, at least as regards basics. Or perhaps one can take it as a warning against change for the sake of change: that

what is new is necessarily better. And there's also the question of honouring, reverencing, esteeming and worshipping the Elders among the Vajjians, and deeming them worthy of listening to.

Well, nowadays, the tendency is to regard older people as **not** being worthy of being listened to. This is quite a (unclear) modern trend. So what do you think about this? Should one really defer to those who are older than oneself? Are they necessarily worthy of listening to just because they are older? Or do you think this is less important now than it was, on account of certain specific reasons?

**Achala:** I think, because this society is a bit unhealthy, people don't get wiser as they get older.

**S:** Mm.

**Achala:** And so it's quite practical not necessarily to look to old people for wisdom.

**S:** You must bear in mind that in those days there was no literature, no written records, nothing that you could consult in that sort of way. So where did you go to learn anything that you wanted to know about? To older people who may have (seen?) it all before, but that, obviously is becoming less and less the case. So we don't go to older people for this sort of thing, except in certain areas. For instance: a girl who is expecting her first child might very well go and ask advice of her mother, because her mother has had four or five children. She'd rather do that than go and consult a text book. So in that sort of way, yes, you often do go to an older person. Or maybe a man who is just entering into business, or he's just not sure of himself, he might consult somebody very much older who's had fifteen or twenty years' experience of business. He might do that sort of thing. Or you might get that sort of thing in politics. But it is very much less than it was because you can study on your own. You can read books by yourself.

It's also a lot easier now. You don't have to depend on older people to help you in that sort of way. And also circumstances change all that more rapidly: In the India of the Buddha's day, changes - social changes, political changes - took place very slowly; but in modern times they take place very quickly, so that your parent's experience is even out of date by the time you grow up. There's not much point in asking your parents; they just don't know. You are living in a different situation so they're equally baffled with you (*chuckling*) Do you see what I'm getting at? So whatever experience they had when they were young is not very relevant to things as they are now - conditions to which **you** have to adapt as a young person.

But do you think there is anything therefore, in this 'looking to older people'? Is it possible for them to have certain experience due to their being older, which you don't have, and which can be useful and valuable to you in a general sort of human way? Do you think this is possible?

**Jennine:** In a spiritual community it would be possible.

**S:** Oh, yes! Certainly! But at present we are keeping it within the positive group. Within the spiritual community, yes! We'll come to that in the next section - but within the positive group?

**Ian A:** I feel so. Just for example: take tutorials at university - you'll find the older people very much able to give something to the tutorials that the younger people don't have. It's experience; it's something that you can't learn out of a book. Quite often it is positive.

**S:** Mm. Mm. But that will depend also on the subject.

Ian A: To a certain extent, yes.

**S:** Because, for instance, supposing you are taking a tutorial on Shakespeare's plays: the element of experience, or additional experience, will be very relevant, because that particular person might have been studying Shakespeare's plays for thirty years, and got very deeply into them. But supposing it was study on one of the sciences, an older person may have got completely behind, and not be very much aware of modern developments, and modern research, and modern discoveries. He might, in fact, be pretty much out of date. So probably on the `Arts' side, it's rather different than what it would be on the `Science' side.

**Ian A:** That is what I was thinking of (unclear).

**Purna:** I would think, generally, it's not possible to take advice from older people. To the extent that they are not individuals, to that extent they're going to be more misleading.

**S:** Yes.

**Purna:** In a sense they're going to be upholders of the group - in a far stronger sense - than younger people. [**S:** Mm. Yeah. Mm.] ..... they're going to be the established order. [**S:** Mm. Yes.]

**S:** And in many cases they're going to be invested with power. Power gravitates to the establishment. ....

**Purna:** ..... and personal interest in maintaining the present conditions.

**S:** It is significant that political power seems to be .....

## END OF SIDE 1 TAPE 1

[Part of sentence missing]

..... it means you've just done the same thing a greater number of times than the other person and not necessarily understood it any better.

**Purna:** No. (*Meaning agreement*). I find this deference to older people quite strongly ingrained in a lot of people.

**S:** Is this a deference to older people because they are old, or because they have more power? Is it a deference to power?

**Purna:** I think it's a (unclear) conditioning, in that these people may be more confused than younger people, or purely because of biological age.

**S:** Yes. They just bluff their way through better. [Pause] And older people very often feel they have the support of the group behind them, and this gives them a sort of false confidence, in talking down to you, the younger person.

But it is something that affects everybody to the extent that they haven't succeeded in becoming an `individual', a `true' individual. And it's something we have to be careful of. [Pause]

All right, let's go on to the `Conditions of the Stability of the Order; in other words, to the spiritual community itself. Can someone read that whole section one, and we'll discuss it clause by clause.

## TEXT

### CONDITIONS OF THE STABILITY OF THE ORDER

*Then the Exalted One addressed the brethren, saying:  
'I will teach you, brethren, seven things that prevent decay. Do ye listen to it carefully. Apply your minds, and I will speak.'  
'Even so, Lord,' replied those brethren to the Exalted One, who then said:  
'So long, brethren, as the brethren shall assemble repeatedly and in large numbers, the prosperity of the brethren may be looked for and not their decay. So long as the brethren assemble in harmony and disperse in harmony, so long as they do the business of the Order in harmony. So long as they introduce no revolutionary ordinance, break up no established ordinance, but live in accordance with the appointed charges,-  
So long as the elder brethren, men of many days and long ordained, fathers of the Order, men of standing in the Order,-so long as these are honoured, revered, esteemed, and deferred to,-  
So long as brethren do not fall subject to that craving which arises and leads back to rebirth,-  
So long as there shall be brethren who are fond of the forest life and lodging,-  
So long as brethren shall establish themselves in mindfulness, with this thought, "Let goodly co-mates in the righteous life come hither in the future, and let those that have already come live happily,-"  
So long, brethren, as these seven things that prevent decay shall stand fast among the brethren, so long as the brethren shall be instructed therein,-just so long may the prosperity of the brethren be looked for, and not their decay.'*

**S:** So we're dealing with the Order; we're dealing with the spiritual community. It's very important to understand, first of all, on what level we're dealing with it. The Buddha starts off by saying: "I will teach you, brethren, seven things that prevent decay." So what do you think is meant by decay? And what does it imply?

**Purna:** The degeneration of the spiritual community into a group.

**S:** Yes. This is true. Yes! Ah, but what does that imply again?

It implies, of course, that the spiritual community can so degenerate. [**Voices:** Mmmm!] **S:** So what does that imply? - That the spiritual community that is under consideration here, is not the spiritual community in the very highest sense of all, that is to say - the `Aryasangha'. In the case of the `Aryasangha' there is no question of decay; there is no question of degeneration because the members of the `Aryasangha' consist, by very definition, of those individuals who at least are `stream-entrants', who are therefore `irreversible'.

So what spiritual community, what Order, what `Sangha', is under consideration here? Well, you can say it's **that** spiritual community which transcends even the `positive group, but which is not yet, - totally at least - not yet the `Aryasangha', or an `Aryasangha'. Do you see what I mean? This is a spiritual community, all of whom, or most of whom, have not yet attained `stream-entry'. Such a community, at least to the extent that it consists of non-'stream entrants', is susceptible to decay and degeneration.

**Achala:** So it could be quite a difficult (unclear) for the FWBO.

**S:** The WBO. Yeh. So the Buddha gives seven conditions here, for the maintenance of the stability of

such an Order, such a spiritual community.

He says: "*So long therefore as the brethren shall assemble repeatedly and in large numbers, the prosperity of the brethren may be looked for, and not their decay.*" So what is the significance of this 'assembling repeatedly, and in large numbers'?

**Udaya:** Contact.

**S:** Contact. Yes. Mm! Contact literally - literal contact.

Actually meeting together physically - in the flesh - as distinct from thinking about one another. **And in large numbers.** Why the large numbers?

**Purna:** It's not just a few of them doing it: it's most of them.

**Achala:** Everyone.

**S:** Mm. But can anyone say anything from their own experience? Especially from those who went on the Order Convention? Does it really make a difference? Is it more than just quantitative?

**Voices:** Mm. Mm.

**S:** Where a large number of committed people, a large number of members of the spiritual community, assemble together, come together, what is the difference? What can one say about that?

**Udaya:** There is almost, already, an established momentum, which, in a sense, if you just sort of lay yourself open to it, you are almost carried along with it. It's that sort of feeling .....

**S:** Mm. Mm.

**Achala:** There's no sort of one-sided eccentricity (unclear).

**S:** Mm. Mm. Yes. Personality differences, differences of temperament seem to be (unclear); or, at least, they don't matter. They are there, of course, but they seem to be absorbed, whereas in a smaller spiritual community they stand out much more, don't they? Or seem more important. There's less polarisation on that sort of basis. But would you say there is greater spiritual intensity ..... **[Voice: Mm!]** .....just on the consequences of greater numbers?

**Purna:** I mean, just in terms, say, of experience here in New Zealand where you'd be lucky to get two or three people fully into meditation and taking Puja - it's quite another situation where you have sixty or seventy people all trying to put themselves fully into what's happening.

**S:** Yeh. Yeh. Mm. Yeh.

**Udaya:** The weird thing is, also, that it's not just a case of say, there's thirty or forty people - that many individuals - each individual seems to increase on their own .....

**S:** Yes!

**Udaya:** That's something that struck me quite heavily on the first Order Day I went to at Four Winds: there were about thirty or forty Order members and there were lots of different types of Order members there, different sorts of people, and yet when we were all together there chanting, it seemed as if each person was quite linked, and that they were so much more than what they were normally,

when they were just by themselves.

**S:** So one could also say, therefore, that the group as such tends to negate your individuality, but the spiritual community tends to enhance it. [**Udaya:** Amplify it.] ..... Amplify it. And this is one of the important differences between the group, even the positive group, and the 'spiritual community': That within the spiritual community you are more of an individual, are able to be more of an individual, whereas within the group, if you're just the one, sole, individual, and especially if your individuality isn't very strongly established, it tends to be crushed by the group, even, perhaps, the positive group, if you're not careful.

But this is very true: within the spiritual community you can be more and more of an individual, more and more yourself in the best sense. And when you're in the midst of a very large gathering of members of the spiritual community your own individuality is enhanced enormously. You're just flashing and sparkling like a little jewel, as it were, that's found the right 'setting', (unclear) chucked upon the rubbish heap, or trodden underfoot as you might be, so to speak, within the group. Whereas now you're placed in the exactly appropriate setting, surrounded with other jewels, so that your own particular, your own individual, beauty is shown off to greater and greater advantage.

**Udaya:** The group seems to be a sort of leveller, whereas the spiritual community seems to highlight individuals but at the same time unify them.

**S:** That's very strange actually, that within the spiritual community there is more and more universality, and more and more unity, at the same time, more and more individuality!

**Ian Allan:** It would appear almost a contradiction in terms, but when you look into it, it isn't.

**S:** There's less and less conflict, and more individuality..... [**Ian A:** Yes] ..... which is very strange; very sort of paradoxical. But that is the way it is. And people feel that freedom to be themselves if there's absence of judgement. I'm speaking of the spiritual community at it's best. When there's an absence of judgement, then there's an acceptance, then they feel (unclear) a happiness that they could be themselves, that they could blossom forth and just be their own unique selves, (unclear) that is possible, they just blossom. That is encouraged even.

**Geoffrey Byng:** There is also the advantage, in the case of somebody who is not yet a member of the spiritual community, but is a member of the group, that there is a (unclear) example there for him to observe.

**S:** This is true. This is very important, so that you don't think that, for instance, this person or that person (unclear) is fully and totally representative, and that everybody in the spiritual community is like that. If you see a large number of members of the spiritual community all with their particular idiosyncrasies then you say, "Well, you don't have to be like this or that: that being a member of the spiritual community doesn't mean having those particular character traits. Otherwise, if all the particular members of the spiritual community that you know are all very much into 'the arts' and you're sort of 'scientific' perhaps, you might feel it is not possible for a scientifically minded person to commit himself; that the spiritual path is only for the artists the poets, and the musicians, or at least people who play on their guitars, and so on.

**Ian A:** This is probably something that happens to a certain extent in any case.

**S:** I think it is inevitable until we get a really large spiritual community, and people can see a really large spectrum of human possibilities, **all committed**. And that's a very great thing to see!

**Udaya:** Mm. I (unclear) on the convention at Vinehall - just such a wide range of people.

**S:** Mm. You meet the young and the old, the bright, and the not-so-bright, the artistic and the scientific. They're **all committed** - the experienced, and the not-so-experienced, the married and the unmarried, and so on.

**Geoffrey Byng:** In the case of individuals who are perhaps not so developed, do you think we could say, if we had a larger sample, is this likely to form cliques and to instigate (unclear)

**S:** Well, there is always the tendency - this is one among many several tendencies - for people who've got similar interests to sort of congregate together. This is inevitable. And when people congregate together on that sort of basis they form a sort of group. So you get groups within the group and therefore pressure. You get pressure groups. This is inevitable. But the more consciousness there is of true individuality and true individuals, and the greater the presence of the spiritual community, the less and less there will be of this sort of thing. I must say at present, in England, I don't think we have any of this sort of thing at all - particular pressure groups - because the presence of the spiritual community, the Order, is so strong.

**Udaya:** It does happen sometimes, though, that people tend to see the Order as a group. (unclear).

**S:** Oh yes! Well, you cannot but see the Order as a group.

**Udaya:** Even as a pressure group.

**S:** Even as a pressure group. Yes. If you are not an individual, and have a very dim idea about what an individual is, you cannot but see the Order, the spiritual community, any spiritual community, as another group. In what other way will you see it? It is impossible for you to see it in any other way. But as you, yourself, develop as an individual, and as you have your own greater and greater, closer and closer, contact with those who are members of the spiritual community, and you begin to get a glimmering of what it is all about, then you will see the spiritual community less and less as a group, and feel less and less pressure from it, and feel more and more encouragement, and feel what you formerly thought of as pressure was just encouragement.

This is not to say that the odd Order member, the weak member, may not be a bit heavy-handed, that's true. But that's a different matter. The spiritual community as such is **not a group**. But it cannot but be seen as a group by those who are still members of the group. Even in language you speak in terms of the group. We speak of a group of Order members. What else can we say? We've got (unclear). What do we say? - a bevy of Order members, a gang of Order members? (Laughter). It is very difficult. We are using language which was fashioned for (unclear).

So it is quite important for those who are within the spiritual community to appreciate the fact that those outside the spiritual community cannot but see the spiritual community as a group. They are not being difficult, or necessarily argumentative, - though that may happen - they are just not able to see the spiritual community as a spiritual community, especially when it consists of very few members; or even going, perhaps, to the other extreme, when it consists of a lot of members, and you're just one solitary non-individual there with maybe a hundred Order members. [Laughter]. You can't help experiencing a very powerful group which is crushing you. You know if you live in a community with too many Order members you can feel a bit sort of crushed, unless those Order members are very mindful and careful. Even then you might still feel crushed.

**Udaya:** It is quite interesting: the first men's community we did up in Auckland, and subsequently since then as well, with different people, I often hear, either directly from people in different situations, or indirectly, that people feel very pressured and threatened by the men's community. I think it's quite odd, but I think the pressure is probably coming from conflict within themselves.

**S:** Mm. Well part of them sort of sympathises with the men's community, even identifies with it; and another part, maybe quite a deep part just doesn't.

**Keith Downing:** People are threatened by commitment at times. [**S:**]Yes! Yes!] All that struggle ...

**S:** Oh yes! Oh yes! Well this is the sort of (unclear) issue: commitment - "So long as the brethren should assemble repeatedly and in large numbers, the prosperity of the brethren may be looked for, and not their decay." - "Prosperity" here is the opposite of "decay". It means growth, ((unclear) development, spiritual progress.

*"So long as the brethren assemble and disperse in harmony; so long as they do the business of the Order in harmony ...."* So harmony is very important. But it is very important to understand what harmony is: that harmony doesn't mean uniformity. I mean here the comparison of the spiritual community to an orchestra is very appropriate: that they are playing different instruments and yet they blend. So it's like that - the harmony of the Order is like that. It doesn't obliterate individual differences. They are all playing the same piece of music, the music of the Dharma.

**Udaya:** You're not losing sight of the context which is, you know (unclear).

**Ian Allen:** The harmony of nature - unity in diversity.

**S:** Unity in diversity - yes. And also you're not suppressing difference: if you think differently to somebody else you feel perfectly free to air that difference. You don't feel you've got to repress it.

*"So long as they introduce no revolutionary ordinance, break up no established ordinance, but live in accordance with the appointed charges"* So do you think this is just conservatism, or what is it? What does it mean? [Pause]

I think it means here, as within the context of the positive group, no change for the sake of change. We've talked about this within the context of the Pujas - we've talked about this within the context of the Pujas when we were in Auckland, do you remember?

There was a time, apparently, in New Zealand (unclear) when everybody who led a Puja felt he had to do it in a different way to, apparently, show how different he was, or how much of an individual he was, etc. - difference for the sake of difference, not because doing it in a different way was more appropriate to that particular occasion, which would be quite acceptable - but difference for the sake of difference, or maybe you just get bored with the old, uh. This is quite an important point - you get bored with what you are doing, maybe, with a spiritual practice, maybe with the Puja, so to relieve your boredom you try to change things about a bit. But this does not really help, because you can become bored again. The thing is to stick with your practice, to stick with that particular way of doing things and get into it more and more deeply.

**Udaya:** It's you that should be changing.

**S:** Mm. Assuming that there is the practice which is for you, in the first place, which there usually is.

**Ian Allan:** Could you not feel when you're doing the Puja slightly differently that it was more in accordance with the way you felt? Maybe then it wouldn't be 'change for the sake of change'.

**S:** Well I think one must be quite careful about one's feelings, uh. Because sometimes one's feelings can be quite whimsical, quite reactive, uh, and one shouldn't listen to them, necessarily, too much.

**Purna:** It raises quite an important psychological (unclear): that neuroses will always tend to set up conditions which perpetuate that neurosis. [**S:** Yes.] We're basically 'bad choosers'

**S:** Mm. And also that neurosis is essentially 'private', uh. [Laughter] Your spiritual practices you have in common with other people: your neurosis is exclusive to yourself.

**Achala:** But you would say that if there's a good reason for change, a sort of evolution and (unclear) that's O.K.?

**S:** Oh yes! Certainly I would say. But here it must be a sort of consensus and not as one reactive person trying to do things in his 'own' way - 'own' in inverted commas - out of maybe, boredom and frustration etc. Oh yes, certainly change is an adaptation that can be introduced. There's no doubt about that! But not just for the sake of change, uh, but just because you discover a better way of doing things; a way more appropriate to the situation, more helpful to individuals including yourself. By all means then introduce the change.

**Geoffrey Byng:** It also seems to have the connotation of holding responsibility as well.

**S:** In what way?

**Geoffrey Byng:** Well (unclear) by living in accordance with 'the appointed charges' and not trying to avoid them, and so 'attack no established ordinance'. It's the same sort of thing: you've got certain duties and responsibilities and you don't try to avoid those.

**S:** Right. Yes. Yes, in a way it's your duty, your responsibility to carry on the established order of things, so long as that established order of things is in accordance with the requirements of the situation. If it seems not to be in accordance with the requirements of the situation, then by all means, consider the possibility of change, but until then it's your responsibility to carry on things as they are.

**Udaya:** I was wondering if there could be another interpretation of .....not introducing any revolutionary ordinances could be that, basically, what Buddhism is concerned with is human beings developing toward enlightenment. That is pretty fundamental throughout life; throughout .....

**S:** Yes; that is true; yes.

**Udaya:** So, in a sense, once Buddhism was established initially by the Buddha there was no change necessary - it's all there. Your interpretations are different; cultures and that may vary but ....

**S:** ...The basic things are common. The basic things are permanent.

**Udaya:** Any change would be a deviation.

**S:** Yes. But here one is, of course, concerned with very broad, and therefore very deep, spiritual and psychological principles. Perhaps this is basically what Buddhism as such is concerned with: it is not

concerned with minutiae of application. Whether your robe is orange, ochre, or whether it's yellow is relatively unimportant. There's no question of 'living in accordance with the appointed charges' here; or shouldn't be!

Alright - "As long as the brethren, men of many days and long ordained, fathers of the Order, men of standing in the Order, so long as these are honoured, revered, esteemed, and deferred to..." What does that mean?

**Purna:** Kalyana mitrata.

S: Kalyana mitrata - but more basically than that.

**Voice:** Hierarchy.

S: Hierarchy. What sort of hierarchy? Hierarchy of power?

**Voice:** Spiritual.

S: Spiritual hierarchy. Genuinely spiritual hierarchy, which cannot be imposed; which has to be spontaneously recognised - something that cannot be insisted upon or enforced.

So - but it **does** say "elder brethren, men of many days and long ordained", as if to emphasise the fact that they'd been monks - in the context within the monastic order, so to speak - a long time. So in what way does this differ from ordinary people who've just got older and older?

**Achala:** They've been evolving.

S: They've been evolving, because within the context of the spiritual community older beings (*chuckling*) are more evolved, yes? under (*unclear*) under correct conditions.

**Udaya:** Yes (*unclear*).

S: Because it means you have been committed for a long time; you've practised for a long time, so you must be more experienced. Not just because you've been in it in a purely external, mechanical sense for a longer time, but because you've longer time in which to develop; so it's on account of that that you are respected, and looked up to. The Buddha says in the Dhammapada that one - that the 'bhikkhu', the 'thera' of ten years' standing may have grey hair, but if his spiritual life is fruitless then he is called 'one who has grown old in vain'. So it is like that.

Actually you find this even today within the monastic community - older Bhikkhus are certainly shown external respect, and they're served first - I've mentioned all this before - but usually younger monks are under no illusions as to where the older monks actually stand: whether they are, in fact, spiritually more experienced, or whether they are simply 'old in vain'. This is usually, generally recognised, at least within the Order. So they continue to show the external respect but when it comes to any real ..... comes to needing any real spiritual advice they won't necessarily go to the older monks, they will go to those who they feel are spiritually more developed, even though they may not be so very old, or not so very long in the Order. So the test is spiritual maturity. But other factors being equal, if you've been a longer time within the spiritual community, you must be spiritually more experienced, and therefore to be respected and deferred to. And this is what, broadly speaking, we do find. I've certainly noticed this: that other factors being equal, people who have been within the Order longer are more experienced; have a better insight into things. There's no doubt

about that, though there are a few exceptions in both directions: (unclear) unfortunately that the odd one or two have "grown old in vain". Also other bright young sparks, so to speak, in spite of their relatively short time in the Order, in the spiritual community, have achieved already, quite a degree of spiritual maturity. One does find that. But broadly speaking, the longer within the Order, the more spiritually mature, and it is quite noticeable.

It's beginning to be quite noticeable in England: there are certain people, maybe ten or twelve people, even fourteen people within the Order, who are definitely outstanding, so to speak, to use that phrase. Other Order members even, do look up to them, and realise that they've got a greater depth of experience; and that they - that is the majority of Order members can go to these people - the minority of Order members - in time of need, and get help and guidance from them, which means that comparatively few Order members need ever come to me. They tend, nowadays to go to these more experienced Order members and they get whatever they [need from] them. They can talk it all out, work it all out, among themselves, whatever it happens to be: a personal difficulty for instance.

Then: *"So long as brethren do not fall subject to that craving which arises and leads back to rebirth"* So what is being referred to here? It's basically the 'gravitational pull'. Craving being a particularly (unclear) manifestation of the 'gravitational pull'. "So long as the brethren" - the spiritual community: so long as those who've committed themselves, do not fall victims to the 'gravitational pull' - progress, *"prosperity can be looked for and not decay."* That's really putting it in a nutshell.

This doesn't mean that the craving won't arise, just that it won't (unclear). It will be arising all the time. It may arise every minute, but it has to be kept under control, as it were. And of course, the basic way in which it arises, or in which it develops and consolidates itself is turning, or trying to turn the spiritual community into a group. This (unclear) within the context of the monastic life. You may try to turn your Vihara into your 'home'; your spiritual friends into your 'family', in the very ordinary sense, for the sake of personal, psychological, emotional security: that's the 'gravitational pull' at work; that's 'craving' at work. One has to be very careful of that.

**Ian Allen:** Might see these people as special friends, so to speak.

**S:** Yes. 'Special friends' inverted commas, rather than as one's own particular 'Kalyana Mitras'. You're going more in accordance with affinity of temperament. You're being influenced too much by that perhaps. Not that you can disregard it all together, certainly in the early stages; but it shouldn't assume too much importance. It shouldn't be the determining factor.

**Udaya:** Maybe there's something to be said for Order members and others to be sort of consciously uprooted every now and again, and moving somewhere else.

**S:** Well this, of course, sometimes happens. In fact very often they want to be uprooted, because they are quite aware of this sort of possibility.

**Purna:** I've noticed how this pull can work in quite devious ways, like in a community situation. We in fact have no personal money: that took a bit of adjusting to. But what I found myself then doing was regarding FWBO money almost as if it was my personal money, in terms of the way I was clinging to it; and community money particularly. I'd just extended my area of ego. [Laughter]

**S:** Yes! Right! That is not what one is supposed to do. It's alright within the group, because the man who is as careful of the group's money as he would have been with his own, well, that is fine, from the group's point of view. In fact this is what one usually looks for [laughter] in a group; but it may not always be correct from the spiritual point of view.

I mean if you are into it on a spiritual basis, the spiritual person, the individual, will be as free with the spiritual community's money as he would have been with the [ordinary] individual's money [*chuckle*]. Not of course recklessly so, or unintelligently so; but there will be that element of generosity when handling the spiritual community's money as much as there would have been had he been simply handling his own individual money.

**Ian Allan:** I can see that this (unclear) applies very strongly to separate communities - male and female communities - where there's attraction to the opposite sex.

[**Megha:** Bhante, your slippers are smoking. **S:** Sorry? (inaudible interchange) Huh. Not actually on fire I think, just nice and warm. (laughter)]

**S:** (continuing) ..... There is a possibility in that situation to fall into craving, one must confess.

**Purna:** I noticed the fall off just as soon as we had women in the community in Auckland.

**S:** One must of course, be careful not to blame the women, as it were, (laughter) because it is a tension which is set between both parties. ....

**Achala:** (coming in) .... on the basis of craving?

**Purna:** I think it is more a game-playing 'getting attention' thing, which presumably has its roots in some form of craving.

**Udaya:** It's just a form of lower human nature really, and, um, when you're setting up a community (one must) try to guard against that.

**Purna:** Knowing yourself.

**S:** Right. Because if you didn't need to guard against it you wouldn't have to guard against it.

**Udaya:** I have spoken before of the spiritual community situation as being a sort of 'kamikaze-pilot' situation - [*laughter and squeals*] - You've only got enough fuel to get you where you want to go, and so the situation is set up in such a way it can't take detours, or at least, you minimise them as much as possible.

**S:** Yes. Yes.

**Udaya:**.... so if you can't trust yourself, at least you can trust the system you set up until there is a more honourable self on duty.

**S:** Yes. Right.

**Ian Allan:** ....A sort of economy run. [Pause]

**S:** Alright. "*So long as there shall be brethren who are fond of the forest life and lodging*" - and this is quite interesting - this "forest life and lodging". What does that suggest? It suggests a completely solitary life. Well, this is what it means. Just going off by yourself into the forest and staying there all on your own. But hadn't the Buddha spoken about assembling repeatedly, and in large numbers? So doesn't this seem to be a contradiction?

**Udaya:** No. I think it suggests a balance.

**S:** Ah! Yes! The going off into the forest is one of the ways in which you can ensure - that individual members in the spiritual community can ensure - that the spiritual community as a whole never becomes a group. This is very, very important. So therefore one must stress this going away on your own, on what we call solitary retreat; must stress it as much as the assembling together regularly and in large numbers. Because if you can go away, whether it is the forest - well, of course, in New Zealand you can do that - or into a cave, and stay on your own happily and productively for a whole month, if not longer, then you can be sure that you are really an individual, at least up to a point, and are functioning as an individual, and therefore treating the spiritual community as a spiritual community: not making it into a substitute for the group. And you can only know this for sure if you can go away and be on your own, all on your own, happily, for at least a month from time to time. That's your guarantee in a way. That's your safeguard! It's in that way that you can know that you are an individual; that you've not degenerated into a group member; that you've not unconsciously turned your spiritual community into a group.

**Ian A:** You don't really know until you go away what stage you've reached. ....

**S:** You don't really!

**Ian A:** You might go away and find that you absolutely hate it and you can't (unclear)

**S:** This is quite possible. That's very instructive and you should stay away until you've dealt with it, and are an individual again. Yes! Indeed!

**Udaya:** You might not be in touch with your individuality when you start your month's solitary, but at least by the time you've finished there will be some (unclear).

**S:** So the solitary retreat is a very important 'institution' within the FWBO, especially within the Order. It's absolutely necessary. It's absolutely vital!

**Geoff Byng:** Maybe some sort of degeneration that has set in (unclear) of the traditional Sangha, due to the fact that actually going on solitaires is not regarded as a good thing in many areas.

**S:** This is true. Though again of course, in some areas it is regarded as very much a good thing, as in Tibetan Buddhism, that you do get hermits. Even in (unclear) monastery taking the monastery as a sort of spiritual community - they go off and stay in the hermitages, sometimes attached to the monasteries, but well away from the community life. And even in some of the Theravada countries you do get the 'forest monks'. So that's a very healthy sort of development, a very healthy tradition; unless, of course, lots of 'forest monks' start living together. Then it becomes an assembly all over again. But more often than not, as far as I know, they do live on their own, and move about on their own.

But again, you mustn't go to extremes: you don't want to set up a sort of 'pratyekabuddha' ideal - 'being on your own', 'doing it your own way', 'you don't need the group',- where you regard the spiritual community as a group, and insist on 'going it alone'. **That** is unhealthy and one-sided. You will develop, as was said, a balance between meeting together regularly and in large numbers, and going off on your own for solitary retreats. And the specific nature of the balance depends upon you. You may need a bit more of one or the other, that's according to your own degree of development, even, perhaps, temperament. If you're naturally gregarious, sociable and talkative, a bit 'loud-mouthed' perhaps, well, have a few more solitary retreats; and if you're a shy, nervous and withdrawn sort of person, well, put more emphasis on coming together frequently and 'in large numbers'.

**Udaya:** You could say that the Order Conventions are as equally important as solitary retreats.....

**S:** ..... Or the other way around: solitary retreats are as equally important as the Order conventions, because the convention is only the biggest and best example of 'the meeting together regularly and in large numbers' - the pattern is: the weekly evening Order meeting, the monthly Order day, and the annual or biennial Order convention, with perhaps, regional gatherings of Order members in between.

**Achala:** Bhante, would you say if someone had an inclination to be in solitary a lot, would it be good for them to do more of the opposite?

**S:** ...Depending on the nature of the inclination: if it was something temperamental, even a bit reactive, yes, I think they should cultivate the opposite. They would just have to examine themselves and find out why they wanted to be on their own so much. It was because they got on better with their meditation, and could get more deeply into it: that's quite valid and acceptable; but if they're naturally shy and withdrawn and wanted to go off on solitary retreat just because of their natural shyness and withdrawnness, then they would need to cultivate the opposite, so to speak.

It would depend whether their going off on solitary retreat was predominantly reactive and in accordance with their conditioned temperament, or whether it was that that enabled them to get more into the spiritual life in the best sense, the Buddhist sense. One would have to see that. So one couldn't therefore generalise and say that if someone had a definite inclination towards solitary retreats they would have to do more, or have more experience of, assembling repeatedly and in large numbers: that would not necessarily follow, it might, but not necessarily.

#### **END OF TAPE ONE. TAPE TWO.**

**S:** Well, *"So long as the brethren shall establish themselves in mindfulness with this thought, 'Let goodly co-mates in the righteous life come hither in the future, and let those that have already come, live happily.'"* So what do you think is the significance of this?: Members of the spiritual community establishing themselves in mindfulness with the thought, 'Let goodly co-mates in the righteous life - that is to say the spiritual life, the life of the 'higher evolution' - 'come hither in the future, and that those who have already come, live happily'.

**Geoff Byng:** Looking into the future again - that aspect of it - instead of looking back into the past.

**S:** Yes.

**Udaya:** Also, it seems to suggest something other than individualistic, sort of closed in approach, it's not just (unclear) but they want to encourage .....

**S:** Yes. Ah! Yes! .... you're open to new arrivals. You don't just settle down, which would mean sort of settling down into a group; turning the spiritual community into a group. You don't just settle down with your favourite, picked friends, and become a bit resistant to the arrival of new people, that is to say new individuals, new members of the spiritual community, either coming from other local spiritual communities, or coming as new members, so to speak. So what do you think might cause you to be a bit resistant to new people, and to settle down in that sort of group-like way?

**Ian: ?** Wouldn't it disturb established ideas, to put new ideas into it.

**S:** In a sense; but in another sense you wouldn't need new ideas in the ordinary way if you were a spiritual community.

**Geoff:** Perhaps it's just that you've got a bit mechanical in your practice.

**S:** Um. Yes.

**Dharmadhara:** You feel you've made it, perhaps?

**S:** You feel you've made it..... Or being reluctant to deal with, or to adjust yourself to, new, so to speak, personality types - people with different temperaments. You get on alright with the people in the spiritual community, those who are already there, but it may more because they are of congenial temperaments rather than because they are individuals like yourself. So the arrival of new people gives you an opportunity to examine that: because you might find that you hear, say, well, a new member of the spiritual community wants to join, wants to come and stay with you, but you feel a sort of unaccountable resistance to that. Well, why should you? Assuming that there's room for him there, and he doesn't have any problems, or anything like that, but you feel a bit resistant to a new member of the spiritual community - say, an Order member whom you haven't met before and don't already know - coming and staying with you. So why is that? Well, it isn't for any spiritual reason, obviously. It's a sort of resistance to the new, the unfamiliar, maybe a different kind of personality, a different temperament, to cope with or to adjust to. You've settled down a bit too comfortably.

**Udaya:** It's always a bit of a challenge really getting to know new people, and making a point that, well, I'm going to get on with this person.

**S:** Um. Yes. I mean, it is being assumed that if they have, basically, the same spiritual commitment as oneself, why should you not be able to get on with them? On the other hand, of course, a community, a spiritual community even, doesn't want too many arrivals and departures.

Again there is such a thing as spiritually settling down - you don't want too many people coming and then going. This is very unsettling from the spiritual point of view. So one's attitude should be an open-minded attitude: "*Let goodly co-mates in the righteous life come hither in the future*". This also suggests the future generation: you don't, if you're are say an older Order member, an older member of the spiritual community "well-stricken in years" etc. etc., feel threatened by the arrival of these fresh, young, enthusiastic, vigorous, new Order members. You're very happy to welcome them, and even to allow them to take over gradually: that's what you want, because you want the whole thing to continue generation by generation. So you welcome this influx of new, young Order members.

"..... *and let those who have already come live happily*": so that's the opposite. You don't want to prevent the arrival of new people, you don't want to throw out the existing people. You see what I mean? You don't have any sort of antagonism as regards those who are already there. You don't want to, so to speak, expel them from the spiritual community for some, maybe selfish, reason of your own. You're quite happy that they should continue to live there contentedly and happily.

**Geoff Byng:** It seems that there's a very strong desire for the will of the other members of the Order.

**S:** Mm.

**Ian Allen:** If it isn't a smooth transition perhaps it isn't a spiritual community.

**S:** Mm. There must be that smooth transition, as it were, from generation to generation, in respect of certain responsibilities - mainly, maybe external responsibilities like responsibilities for running the

different Centres. I've envisaged a situation in which the older Order members gradually withdraw from involvement in the practical day to day running of Centres, and are more sort of spiritually available: that people, whether younger, less experienced members of the Order, or Mitras, or Friends, or even other people, if they want to consult the older, more experienced Order members, well they've got the opportunity to do so. Those older more experienced people are free, and maybe they are spending more and more time in meditation, in some cases. Because when you're young you've got a certain energy which you just don't have when you're older: a sort of 'go-getting' energy, and you should make full use of it when you're young.

\_\_\_\_\_ : A primitive energy.

**S:** It's almost a primitive type of energy that can cut through lots of obstacles. The older people don't have this. They may have a more refined sort of energy, even a better energy, but that rather crude, what you've described as 'primitive' energy, usually the young have; and it's very useful, and to be used at that time, but after fifteen, twenty years you may not have it any more; and it would be inappropriate for you to be engaged in activities where that particular type of energy was necessary.

I mean, it's necessary, for instance, in the situation in India. Lokamitra's got quite a large dose of this kind of energy. And I can see - I saw when I was there - it's really necessary. You need to cut through so many obstacles - a very refined, subtle energy would be lost there; it would be wasted there. You need something, not only quite powerful, but with a quite sharp, cutting edge. It's really needed there. But as you get older you tend to lose that sort of edge. Not that you really lose it: your energy becomes a bit more refined, so you can't function quite in that sort of way; but you can function in other ways that the person who's employing perhaps the crude, primitive energy cannot function in. So then you take on a different kind of role, a different kind of responsibility. And this should happen more by way of a sort of natural transition. You shouldn't get the older Order members hanging on to their positions in FWBO centres as chairmen, and secretaries, and treasurers and what-not, no! Give way gladly to the younger Order members who've got that sort of energy, and who are going to keep up spiritual contact with you anyway, so that you can give any spiritual guidance that may be necessary. So hand over gladly when the time comes, when you've reached the age of about eighty or (*laughter*) .. well, let's say forty-five or fifty, or whatever it may be. I hope no one was expecting me to say thirty! [*Laughter*] But I think this is what this passage has in mind. This is the sort of thing that it is saying to bear in mind: the spiritual community shouldn't be a closed group which is resistant to fresh blood, and which has a tendency to expel anyone who doesn't conform, so to speak. "*So long, brethren, as these seven things that prevent decay shall stand fast among the brethren, so long as the brethren shall be instructed therein, just so long may the prosperity of the brethren be looked for and not their decay.*"

So - "*just so long as these seven things stand fast among the brethren*" - that is to say, so long as they are actually observed. "*So long as the brethren shall be instructed therein*" - this suggests that new people, new Order members, new members of the spiritual community, should have these sort of things, these sort of principles made clear to them. They must be actually explained in so many words. One often finds this sort of thing necessary. For instance: I found it necessary in England until comparatively recently, to explain in so many words again and again, the distinction between the Order and the FWBO - between the WBO and the FWBO. A lot of people just found it very difficult to get this clear: so it had to be explained. So in much the same way all these sort of principles need to be explained, and discussed and made clear, so that they can be thoroughly understood by all concerned, and put into practice.

Such things like the distinction between the 'group', even the 'positive group', and the 'spiritual community': these things need to be spelled out - the need for regular contact, the need for solitary

retreat - both of these present but held in balance. These things need to be spelled out, and made clear to everybody concerned.

Alright, let's go on to section two. maybe someone will read that straight through.

2

*'Brethren, I will teach you seven other conditions that prevent decay. Do ye listen to it. Apply your minds carefully. I will speak.'*

*'Even so, Lord,' replied those brethren to the Exalted One. The Exalted One said: 'So long as the brethren do not delight in (worldly) activities, are not busybodies nor devoted to activities,-*

*So long as the brethren are not gossipers, not delighting in gossip, not devoted to gossip,-*

*So long as the brethren are not sluggish, not delighting in sleep, not given to somnolence,-*

*So long as the brethren are not given to company, not delighting in company, not devoted to company,-*

*So long as the brethren are not slaves of evil desires,-*

*So long as the brethren are not the friends, comrades, and associates of men of evil ways,-*

*So long as the brethren shall not come to a stop upon the Way by the attainment of lesser excellence,-*

*Just so long, brethren, as these seven conditions that prevent decay shall be established and the brethren are instructed in them, -so long may the prosperity of the brethren be looked for, not their decay.'*

**S:** Mm. Alright, let's look at these seven: "*So long as the brethren do not delight in (worldly) activities, and are not busybodies, nor devoted to activities.....*" - you notice: `worldly' is put in brackets. This means it's been added by the translator. It is something understood rather than explicitly stated in the text. So what do you think the Buddha has in mind here, when he says "So long as the brethren do not delight in worldly activities, and are not devoted to activities"? Do you think he has in mind activities like running a Centre, or has he got something else in mind?

**Achala:** Activities that waste energy, (unclear) more spiritual.

**S:** Mm. .... without being productive for the individual, either for himself or other people - other people who are potential individuals.

**Purna:** It seems a bit like the way *virya* is used: `energy bent on, used for, in pursuit of - the good'. Not just energy generally.

**S:** Mm. Yes. Mm.

**Purna:** And that, presumably, what is meant here is activity that is not used for the pursuit of the spiritual life.

**S:** Yes, which is not conducive to anybody's development in any way. And, of course, you may perhaps engage in activities which in themselves are not conducive to anybody's development, but within a wider pattern, may be so. For instance sticking stamps on envelopes, well, that isn't an activity particularly conducive to spiritual life, but suppose you're posting off copies of your latest

newsletter, well then, it becomes a different kind of activity: it becomes an activity conducive to spiritual development within that particular context. One has to see that factor also.

**Achala:** I think one of the more prevalent ways of wasting energy is talking about other people, though it's not productive in any way.

**S:** Yes. Well that comes afterwards, doesn't it, under gossip? But you notice also "busybodies"? I mean, there's quite a big difference between being busy and being a 'busybody'. Do you see the difference? Who or what is a busybody?

**Ian A:** (unclear) somebody else's business rather than their own.

**S:** Yes, but why does a person do this?

**Ian A:** Because they can't find enough in themselves to....

**S:** But why can't they find enough in themselves, why can't they work on themselves?

**Megha:** Because they find this too uncomfortable.

**S:** ...It's too uncomfortable. It's easier working on other people; trying to put other people right.

\_\_\_\_\_ : It's an avoidance.

**S:** Yes. It's a sort of avoidance. And it's all the more insidious if it's under the guise of 'doing good' to other people.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mm!

\_\_\_\_\_ : It's a fine line.

**S:** Yes. And not only is the word 'busybody' used, but "devoted to activities". So what does this suggest: that somebody is "devoted to activities"? It suggests your activities are sort of compulsive.

**Ian A:** Like some people are devoted to a particular sport.

**S:** It's not something that you freely and consciously enter into for the sake of your own development, the development of other people, or both, it is something you can't help getting into; you're impelled, you're compelled. It's compulsive.

**Udaya:** I've often thought that a lot of single inverted commas, 'causes', especially a social action group, or even the ecology group, a lot of things that they're trying to do are intrinsically and basically good, but a lot of people get involved with them, I think, basically, for quite unhealthy reasons: sort of like the 'near enemy' of the spiritual life.

**S:** Yes.

**Udaya:** It's in a sense, very good, but at the same time it's not the best. It's sort of like that .....

**S:** The fact that this is good provides them with a convenient rationalisation for their very questionable motives. Of course it's good to stop seal hunting; of course it's good to stop the

extermination of the whale - no body doubts that; but are the reasons for which we get involved in these good causes necessarily good? Is your own subjective attitude necessarily a healthier state of mind in terms of your own personal development? So what is the sign of compulsive activity? How can you know whether our activity is compulsive or not?

**Achala:** You get `withdrawal' symptoms.

**S:** Ah! [*Laughter*] That really hits the nail on the head! Yes you get `withdrawal' symptoms. If you're stopped, and you're prevented from doing it for any reason, you just get `withdrawal' symptoms, which shows that you were addicted. I was reading recently a very interesting book - I don't know whether it's reached anybody here - published in America, and republished in England: "*Love and Addiction*". Anybody heard of it? I forget the name of the author, but it's a very good book; a very useful book; and it deals with the whole subject of addiction, more particularly `addictive relationships'. It has a very interesting chapter on `The addictive society': that our whole society encourages addiction in various forms, and it mentioned the example of a psychologist in the States - they're always doing these sort of wonderful things in the States - who conducted an experiment on people who were in the habit of watching T.V. So he took them off T.V. for a whole month and they exhibited `withdrawal' symptoms just as people do when they are taken off hard drugs. So this is one of the criteria: if you are into something compulsive; if it has become a `drug' for you; if you are addicted to it, when you're taken off it by force of circumstances, or for any other reason, in any other way, you develop `withdrawal' symptoms.

For instance: your girlfriend changes her mind about you; she goes off with somebody else: you develop `withdrawal' symptoms. Your T.V. set is taken away, or it goes wrong: you develop `withdrawal' symptoms because you can't watch your favourite programmes. Or, even when you're taken out of your familiar cultural environment you can develop `withdrawal' symptoms. One or two of our Friends seemed to have developed mild `withdrawal' symptoms when going from England to India - out of one familiar culture into another unfamiliar culture - at least mild withdrawal symptoms for a short while. So that's a pretty sure indication of addictiveness, and in this context, of compulsive activity.

**Udaya:** It's really quite amazing, because it suggests that there's nothing intrinsically addictive in the object, it's more .....

**S:** This is one of the important conclusions arrived at by the author of this book. And he said that what happened - how this whole line of enquiry started - was when American war veterans started coming back from Vietnam who were hooked on drugs, especially `hard' drugs, and medical opinion thought that this was going to be quite a problem because these people were permanently `hooked': allegedly those who were on heroin; and it was going to be practically impossible to `unhook' them. So the American Government would have a very big drugs problem on its hands: but to the surprise of all the experts, in fact to the consternation practically of all the experts, the vast majority of these war veterans when they got back to the States came off the drugs, even off heroin, within a matter of weeks, with no problem or difficulty whatever, it seems. So the conclusion at which they tentatively arrived is that there are no addictive substances, but that anything is potentially addictive depending on your attitude towards it; depending upon your state of mind; depending on your personality structure. There is an addictive personality: there are not addictive things. You can use anything to support your addictiveness. So you can get into addictive relationships. Yes, you can use drugs in an addictive fashion; you can use T.V. in an addictive fashion; you can use reading in an addictive fashion; you can use reading newspapers in an addictive fashion. They can all be addictive if you've got an addictive personality. And of course, they go into what makes the addictive personality, which is quite an interesting story.

**Purna:** I have heard of similar conclusions from experiments done in Hamburg on a group of medical students. Half of them were given heroin and half of them were given water, and injected. The students knew they were taking part in a heroin addiction experiment, but they never knew whether they were getting the water or the heroin. Apparently they were getting all sorts of weird results. People who had been given water would go through withdrawal symptoms, while others who had been given enough heroin which, under normal circumstances would have been sufficient enough to addict them, were experiencing no ill effects when they stopped.

**S:** Yes. Mm. Well, the conclusions points in the same direction, doesn't it.

**Purna:** Yes: the addictive personality.

**Udaya:** How is that directly combatted then, that addictive attitude?

**S:** Well, basically, by self-knowledge: because people who become addicted, or become addicted to something - this, that or the other - have addictive personalities because of general feelings of inadequacy and feeling it's got to come from outside; so what has to be dealt with is the feeling of personal inadequacy and worthlessness. This is the basic problem: not getting you off drugs but restoring the sense of your own personal worth.

**Geoff B:** Presumably if a person has an addiction to something the emotional attitude will be such that they'll develop a (unclear) emotional addiction too, which (unclear).

**S:** Well, one might put it this way: addictions don't usually come singly, because the personality is addictive. You may have one or two principal addictions, let's say, but you will have a whole `family' of them. The likelihood is that you will be addicted to lots of things: addicted to life; addicted to existence; but there are certain things that stand out, that stick out even. It may be drugs, it may be T.V., it may be a personal relationship, etc., etc. You may be addicted to minding other people's business. You may be addicted to work. Yes, that's another important addiction in the American context: addicted to work. There are some people who can't stop working, and this is what happens with many people on their retirement: when they retire they're not really able to stop working and they develop withdrawal symptoms. Some people develop withdrawal symptoms when they have to work: they are addicted to leisure and doing nothing, and so on; but in the American context it is addiction to work which is the problem, so to speak, well superficially, if you see what I mean. Work is a common object of addiction, let's say.

One gets the impression from this book that work and personal relationships are the two principal objects of addictiveness. Well, they're the two commonest things that one encounters: one cannot but work, usually; and one cannot but have personal relationships, so they become objects of addiction.

\_\_\_\_\_ : And in a way, they are very generally accepted ones.

**S:** Yes! Right! This is the great insidiousness and danger of them: If you become addicted to someone in a sort of pseudo-romantic context, people will think this admirable, and wonderful, and beautiful; and they will make films out of it, and write romantic novels about it. It is not regarded as a sort of disease which is what it ought to be regarded as - a form of mental illness - it's romanticised.

\_\_\_\_\_ : It's regarded as something quite natural .....

**S:** .... Something quite natural ....

\_\_\_\_\_ : And if you're not like that maybe there's something wrong with you .....

**S:** Well, the same thing with work: if you're not addicted to your work, if you're not keen on it ..... but if you say, 'I can't live without my work', well, this is regarded as very admirable! Or 'I'd die if I had to give up my work', well 'How admirable, he's so devoted to his work', when we ought to say he's addicted to his work, and to that extent, mentally ill, and in need of a cure! But no! that's not the common attitude: 'It's wonderful that he should be addicted to his work!' Addiction becomes almost a term of praise, like 'aggressive': 'Oh, he's very aggressive', they say. So in terms of American business life, this is high praise: an aggressive salesman, aggressive salesmanship, aggressive marketing. These are terms of praise. So he's addicted to work: 'Oh, what more could you hope for than that!' [Laughter] 'He's addicted to work.' (\_\_\_\_\_ : inaudible)

**Geoff Byng:** It reminds me of what you were saying before, about the precept about intoxicants.....

**S:** Yes! Right! Yes. This precept about intoxicants, the fifth precept, is much more a question of addiction, than of allegedly addictive substances. Of course we know alcohol has a deleterious effects, but what is more important is that we should not be addicted to alcohol rather than we should simply not take alcohol. Do you see the distinction? There's not much point in not taking alcohol if you're addicted to other things. You've got to deal with the reason for your addictive-ness, not merely remove one particular object of addiction. You've got to grapple with your own fundamental craving, your 'thirst', your 'trсна'.

**Purna:** So how does one deal with addiction in oneself, through self-awareness?

**S:** Well, in the psychological context, which is the context of this particular book - which is rather weak on the positive side, I must admit - you have to come to terms with your own feelings of general inadequacy and worthlessness. And no doubt spiritual friends can help you very much there, because people can build up your feeling of worth by regarding you as having worth, and you start feeling that. You start feeling: 'Well, I am accepted. People do value me; people do like me; they do find me a positive person; so what's all this nonsense about my not feeling happy about myself and running myself down and devaluing myself, why should I do it?' So spiritual friends can be very helpful here; even ordinary positive friends can be very helpful here. I think it is probably very difficult to do it on your own, if you're the sort of person who habitually looks down on yourself, don't like yourself, don't love yourself, depreciates yourself. I think it is very difficult to get over this without the moral, the spiritual and emotional and psychological support of other people who really think well of you, genuinely. It must be the genuine thing; not just 'therapeutic', inverted commas, sort of once a week for half-an-hour: but that if other people really accept you and you feel that you are really accepted by other people, and you feel that you are accepted despite all your imperfections and your short-comings, and despite the fact that you're not particularly glamorous, and are rather ordinary, and a bit dull at times, but still you are accepted. It helps you to accept yourself. So, again, the spiritual community is very, very useful, and very relevant.

**Udaya:** You don't think the solitary retreat situation would be all that beneficial?

**S:** I think one would have to be a little careful here; but certainly, eventually, in the long run, the solitary retreat situation can be very helpful. It's forcing you really to confront yourself and your own depreciation of yourself.

**Udaya:** But maybe you need a little confidence before.

**S:** You need a little confidence before, yes, I think you do.

**Udaya:** It's very difficult with people who do play a sort of 'martyr' game, which is a very common one, because there might be someone you start off ..... you quite like them, but they've got this thing that nobody likes them, and nobody trusts them .....

**S:** Yes! And they enhance that.

**Udaya:** ..... and you end up not liking them, and not trusting them because they're into playing their 'martyr' game all the time ....

**S:** ..... and you get so fed up with it. You think: 'Well, OK if you want to be kicked, OK I'll kick you! [Laughter] You start feeling like that. 'If that's what you want, I'll jolly well give it to you!' You get fed up with their games. But still, one has, if possible, not to react in that sort of way. And most people have got some loveable traits that you can direct your attention to. [Pause]

And of course, very often, a person's self-depreciation, or even self-contempt, is an internalisation of the attitude towards them of other people in their own earlier days. If you've been told when you were very young, "You're no good; you'll never achieve anything; what do you think you'll ever do!": if you've been constantly run down in this way, well of course you internalise it; and you start telling yourself that, and you don't even tell yourself that, it's just what you believe. It's your own fixed attitude towards yourself. And then you need others to help you undo all that, because it was others who got you into that situation in the first place. I don't think anybody naturally - unless, perhaps, you bring over something very heavy from a previous life - I don't think anybody naturally thinks ill of themselves. I think it is something that you are conditioned into. I think everybody naturally values themselves, and likes themselves in a healthy sort of way. If you have any other attitude I'm pretty certain you've been conditioned into that by your early upbringing.

**Achala:** If a person isn't on very good terms with themselves, are they generally aware of that or is it just a blockage?

**S:** No. I think very often it's deeply buried at first. I don't think they are conscious of any particular attitudes towards themselves. That's been my own experience at least so far in the movement. Or else, even if they're conscious of it, it's such a sort of 'given' thing with them. They regard it as an obvious fact, they don't regard it as an opinion that they have about themselves; or an attitude that they have developed towards themselves, or with regard to themselves, perhaps without reason, no: it's a sort of 'law of nature' almost, just like there's a sun in the sky, and so in the same way something is obviously bad: they say, 'I'm unlikeable'. They regard it as a fact of nature, not an attitude towards themselves that they've developed. And it's quite difficult to get people to see, at first, that it's just a way that they've developed of looking at themselves, and it isn't what they, scientifically, are. With some people it connects with their personal appearance; with some people it connects with their sense of achievement or non-achievement; or it may have no particular basis at all. It might have been so drummed into them in their early days, in a completely arbitrary manner: that they were just no good; and that's what they believe about themselves. That is what they feel; but they don't feel it as a feeling about themselves: they regard it as seeing something which is actually objectively there - that they are no good - and it's that that one has got to get over, or get them over. Get them to see that it is just a particular attitude they've adopted towards themselves, and into which they've been conditioned.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mmm.

**Ian A:** I think we probably underestimate how many things are conditioned in ourselves that have always been there.

**S:** Yes. Right. Mmm.

**JENNINE:** Do you think a person has to do that first before they can spiritually develop?

**S:** I'm sure of this, yes! I don't think you can get very far, if any distance at all, spiritually, in any real sense, unless you have a sense of your own individual worth and value. Because how can you develop yourself if you don't love yourself, and think you a pretty miserable specimen, and not much good. You have to have a certain self-confidence, and self-respect, and even self-esteem, before you can develop. Before you can grow. You've got to think that you're worth developing. If you get a seed which (*delayed laughter*) you're convinced is not going to develop, you don't bother watering it. If you think it's a rotten seed, and it's gone bad, and it's dead, and it's not going to grow anyway - you're not going to bother watering it, and cultivating it, or planting it in the ground. So it's the same with oneself: if you think you're no good, well you're no good; if you're no good for ordinary life, you're not going to be any good for spiritual life, if that's your opinion about yourself. So you must have this positive attitude toward yourself, which corresponds, subjectively, psychologically, with the positive group. You've got to be a positive, healthy individual, at least to some extent, first; and have a positive healthy liking for yourself, before you can start growing spiritually. I'm sure you don't grow spiritually in any way out of self-hatred and self-contempt; and I'm sure that some forms of Christianity have done a lot of harm to people in terms of their spiritual development, by encouraging them to have a very negative psychological attitude towards themselves. It may be that in a theological sense, people are 'miserable sinners': well, Buddhism is quite aware of human imperfections, and the extent of human greed and ignorance, but it does not represent a devaluation of the individual as an individual. There isn't anything psychological. But, I'm afraid some forms of Christianity have done a great disservice and have done a great harm to many people, by giving them a very negative sense of themselves.

**Ian:** Maybe it came about because it was taught that especially in the Christ religions that only the grace of God could save them and they could do nothing to save themselves.

**S:** Mm. Yes. Well, it is more or less the same in the Catholic Church, because you are only saved by 'grace', but in the Catholic Church by 'the sacraments'. Perhaps there's a bit less pressure in the case of the Catholic Church because you've always got an avenue of escape through confession and absolution. You don't have that in the case of the Protestants, or in the case of Protestantism, so you are left with the full weight of your own sins. (*Transcriber's note - there is a place for confession and absolution in the Anglo-Catholic branch of the Anglican Church, which considers itself Protestant, as it is not under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic pope.*)

But even many, many Catholics that we know, have got this terrible sense of sin. There are so many of our own Friends, ex-Catholics, who, even after ordination have really had to struggle with this. It's taken them years and years in some cases, to work themselves free from this sense of sin and guilt, and general worthlessness, and to believe in themselves.

**Ian:** I think, possibly, being brought up as a Protestant, there's probably less pressure to believe this sense of guilt. Talking personally, and so you wouldn't have so much to overcome.

**S:** I think it depends what sort of Protestant.

**Ian:** Yeah. Nominal 'Church of England'. [Laughter]

**S:** 'Church of England' tends to let people off pretty lightly. *[Laughter]* If you'd been brought up in a rigid Calvinist in Scotland, that would have been a different story.

**Dharmadhara:** Some people are attracted to Buddhism because it gives them an opportunity of punishing themselves.

**S:** That's true! I've found this with the Zen people - the English Zen people. Yes! It was very noticeable, and they thought that if it was hurting them it must really be doing them a lot of good, and they were clearly, well in psychological jargon, sort of masochistic types. They enjoyed suffering. Well, 'enjoyed' it in a manner of speaking, but they felt a certain psychological relief in experiencing suffering, because they were expiating their sins, apparently. Oh yes! One noticed it in England certainly, at one stage, when I had contact with them - that the people who had got into Zen, and took up Zen very seriously, were of a very definite psychological type: they all seemed very sort of 'protestant'. They all seemed rather - what shall I say? - rather gloomy, mournful, serious, elderly kind of people, rather grim people, getting into Zen really grimly, with lots of gritting of teeth *[laughter]* and aching of knee joints but it was all doing you good. But it had to hurt or it wasn't 'the real thing'; it really wasn't Zen if it wasn't really hurting; you had to really endure it with clenched teeth and knitted brows. The real Bodhidharma stuff! *[Laughter]*

**Purna:** There's elements of that with the Burmese based so called 'vipassana' meditation technique.

**S:** There are elements of that so far as Western practitioners go, probably not with Eastern ones.

**Purna:** What struck me was: a teacher telling me that the more you sort of almost 'weathered through', the more you were burning up previous karma.

**S:** Ah! Yes! I think that is quite dangerous.

**Purna:** There was Buddhist terminology, but it was very much this expiation of sins through suffering.

**S:** .... which is really not a Buddhistic idea at all. I mean the classic Buddhist position is of suffering as something to be completely eliminated. I don't think in the entire Buddhist scriptures, certainly not in the Pali Canon, is there any reference to expiation through suffering, or to suffering as having a purifying effect on the character. I do not think there is a single reference to that! It seems definitely not to have been the Buddha's teaching, or the Buddha's attitude. Suffering was something entirely inimical to the human life, to the human being, and is something that is just to be got rid of to the extent that was possible! It's as though the Buddha saw no good in suffering at all, for its own sake. If it's incidental to, say, meditation and so on, well, you accept it as such, but if you could meditate without suffering, so much the better. You wouldn't invalidate your spiritual life if it was entirely without suffering.

I mean there is a short text where the Buddha says that there are four kinds of people in respect of their spiritual life and their spiritual progress. One kind has it difficult all the way: they experience suffering at every stage of their spiritual life. Another type: their spiritual life starts off easy but as it progresses difficulties mount up, and suffering is experienced. Another type: It's very difficult at the beginning but it gradually gets more and more easy, and pleasant. But there's another type that has it easy and comfortable and pleasant and blissful all the way, all the time. *[Murmurs in the background]* So the Buddha did not rule out that possibility, which means that suffering is not an integral part of the spiritual life. I mean, apart possibly, from the initial dissatisfaction that you

experience which sort of catapults you out of the `samsara'. You must feel of course a bit dissatisfied with things, at least before you even make an effort to develop; but suffering is not an integral part of the spiritual life as such, which means that you do not necessarily progress the more you suffer; which is what some people, some Zen people, in the West think: the more you suffer, the more good it is doing you. It is not necessarily so.

**Purna:** I wonder if there are some elements of this in this sort of talk of `weathering through' things.

**S:** Mmm. Yes.

**Purna:** ..... whether there's not some sort of element of "it must be doing you good because it's suffering".

**S:** I think what it is .....

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

to some extent - what I think it is to some extent is that people don't like to think there's any experience of theirs which is wasted. I think it's a form of attachment: they can't bring themselves to think, `Well, this is entirely useless, just let it go, throw it away, it's no good, finish with it!': `It must have some meaning and significance, that if I'm suffering, well, it must have some meaning and significance - what is that? Well, it must be doing me good.' And in this way they can sort of reconcile themselves to the suffering. This is why some orthodox Christians sometimes think, 'if some terrible calamity happens to me, well, it must be somehow for my good. After all it's come from God, so God must have meant it for my benefit.' They can't accept the fact that it's foolish and ridiculous and unnecessary, and just dismiss it as such. They want to give it some sort of pseudo-meaning.

**Geoff Byng:** What if you're say going out into the busy on a solitary and you chose quite trying conditions for that (unclear)

**S:** Why should you choose trying conditions? I mean, assuming that you can do it equally well, from the spiritual point of view, without those trying conditions. If you find it necessary to strengthen your determination and therefore you choose trying conditions so as to strengthen your determination, fair enough, that is perfectly valid. But if you choose trying conditions for their own sake, it suggests that you've a bit of a problem there. So a person who is proceeding happily - *supatipanno* - and enjoying his spiritual life is not necessarily making less progress than someone who is sort of puffing and blowing and having a very difficult time, and lots of pain, and lots of suffering. The latter is not necessarily making more progress. So I think it is quite important to remember that (Pause)

Anyway we've digressed rather widely haven't we? Never mind. *'So long as the brethren are not gossipers, not delighting in gossip, not devoted to gossip -'* Well, what's wrong with gossip? Some people like gossip, some people think it has a quite positive social function to play. Do you agree with that from a spiritual point of view?

**Udaya:** Ninety percent of the time it's probably negative mental processes.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes.

**S:** Yes, a lot of it is negative unfortunately. Innocent gossip is comparatively rare. And again, don't you notice that very often gossip is compulsive?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mmm.

**S:** And what is one of the signs that you've been gossiping? How do you feel at the end of a good session of gossip?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Churned up?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Drained.

**S:** Drained. I think that's the character, you feel drained, you feel exhausted. You don't feel enhanced or enlivened. You feel drained. (Pause) So one has to be really careful always, that 'light' conversation doesn't pass over into gossip, especially malicious gossip.

**S:** "*So long as the brethren*" - (mustn't miss that one!) (Laughter) "*are not sluggish, not delighting in sleep, not given to somnolence*" - " Well, this is pretty obvious isn't it? But again it doesn't mean that you should go to extremes, not that you should deliberately try to cut down your sleep to two or three hours a night under the impression that you'll thereby automatically make speedier spiritual progress. No! Take what sleep is necessary, by all means, for you physically and mentally. Be fresh and bright. But don't just indulge in sleep; don't become sluggish. Don't delight in sleep. Why do you think people do this? I mean leaving aside those people who seem to need more sleep quite objectively. Why do you think people indulge in sleep?

**Ian:** Boredom you know, with being awake.

**S:** It is just boredom? Or ...?

**Geoff Byng:** Depression.

**S:** Umm?

**Geoff:** Depression.

**S:** Depression. They don't quite like to face the world, do they.

**Purna:** Perhaps it's a type of addiction as well.

**S:** Yes. It's all so easy and comfortable. Some psychologists have suggested it represents a sort of return to the womb. Everything is warm and comfortable and cosy, dark, undisturbed. You don't have to face anything, don't have to make any decisions, don't have to do anything. It's infantile, in a way, or it can be infantile.

**Geoff Byng:** What does a person do if they are a bit sluggish?

**S:** Do you mean genuinely tired?

**Geoff Byng:** No, no, no. I actually mean insofar as they've got a sluggish attitude towards life, and they need to stir it up a bit.

**S:** Again, the spiritual community. Or at least a lively community that will chivvy them up a bit, and get them moving, get them involved in things, which they will probably intensely resent at first, but

eventually they will accept and get into it and start enjoying it, start enjoying life. Sometimes it's a sort of indirect demand for attention. You want someone to come along and get you up. There can be that aspect to it. You want people, or someone, to take a bit of interest in you. "Why aren't you getting up? You feel alright today? Would you like a cup of tea? Shall I bring you one?" They start perking up then, you see, because maybe it's the attention that they wanted.

**Ian:** It's a bit of a cultural thing as well. Lying in bed on Sunday.

**S:** That's true! Yes! Yes! That can be very conditioned - that you're almost obliged to lie in bed on Sundays. (Pause) Maybe you don't want to, maybe you'd much rather get up. But perhaps you think that you don't.

**Megha:** It's also thinking that you should maybe sleep. I remember a couple of times I've felt very energetic late at night, it's happened very rarely, and not wanting to go to sleep, and yet knowing I've got to get up the next morning, you know, I should go to bed ...

**S:** Um. Yes. That's the unfortunate part. You have to decide which is better to do. If you've got to get up early and go to work, then you almost have to force yourself to go to bed and go to sleep, just so that you can get up and go to work, which seems ridiculous.

**Megha:** Yes.

**Purna:** Especially after a meditation and Puja. You can't get to sleep after it.

**S:** Mm. But then that question is bound up with so many other things. Work, livelihood, right livelihood, the general pattern of one's life.

**Megha:** I remember at one stage, one of the times I didn't have to go to work, but I was still very caught up in the idea that I would be tired the next day and won't be on the ball, or - and yet the energy was quite positive, or it felt quite positive.

**S:** I think perhaps one should just have more confidence in one's own energy, one's own resilience and one's own adaptability.

**Ian:** And take the opportunity to read or do something which you may have the energy to do and let things take their course naturally.

**S:** Yes

**Megha:** Yeah.

**S:** And then after a while you'll start feeling tired, feel a bit sleepy, feel like going to bed, and maybe just have a shorter sleep than usual, and get up at the accustomed hour.

**Megha:** What surprised me was the idea that I should go to bed, instead of just allowing it to take its own course.

**S:** Mm. That is surprising.

**Dharmadhara:** People take sleeping pills because they can't get to sleep. It affects them.

**S:** It raises this whole question of this 'ought'. I mean here, it is sort of connected with the fact that one has been brought up in a particular way, or at least has lived in a particular way, and 'ought' attaches to that. You 'ought' to live in that way. Like mealtimes, you know, people get into a sort of rut almost, which may be necessary for practical purposes, but if you start feeling it as a sort of almost ethical imperative that you 'ought' to eat at one o'clock and that there is something wrong if you don't, even you've done something wrong if you don't, well, then it becomes very mistaken.

**Geoff Byng:** What would you have to say about the going to bed late, getting up early thing in this connection?

**S:** Going to bed late and getting up early?

**Geoff:** No. Either of the two.

**S:** Oh! Either of the two. I think going to bed late and getting up early is ideal! (*Laughter*) It seems people do differ a little bit, here. I mean there are people, it seems who definitely are 'early-birds', and other people who definitely, you know, pretty late birds. I've noticed that in communities it isn't easy for the two sorts of people to live together, because if you want to get up early, and some people do feel like getting up early and having a meditation, you've got to go to bed early to be able to get up early, but some people like to go to bed late, they don't feel at all tired come eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock, one o'clock, they just feel brighter and brighter, they feel like reading, they feel like listening to records, they feel like even going out for a walk. There are people whose sleep cycles seem to be adjusted a bit more to the hours of daylight than to the hours of darkness, and it is quite difficult for them to adapt, but we've almost got a sort of Puritan work-ethic attitude towards getting up early, it's as though if you don't get up early, well it's not that you're just not getting up early, it's almost as though you're doing something morally wrong. Because logically, if you go to bed say at three in the morning, why shouldn't you get up at ten the following the morning? You've only had seven hours sleep. But it's as though it's forgotten that you went to bed at three, it's only remembered that you got up at ten! (*Laughter*) As though you'd been sluggish and just laying in bed and had all that extra time in bed, which isn't the case at all. So it's very easy for those who are naturally early birds forgetting that they went to bed early, it's very easy for them to look down on the late birds, remembering only that they got up very late. But I think one has to recognise that people do have different sleep-cycles, but also I think this means recognising that it is very difficult for people whose sleep cycles differ too widely, to live together in the same community, because if you're going to have a community at all, you need to meditate together, and that means regular morning and evening meditation. If some people are not up in the morning to meditate, or if others, say, at night have already gone to bed, then how can you all meditate together, so, I think this has to be considered quite seriously. But it's not morally wrong to go to bed late and get up late, but some people seem to think it is because it interferes with the normal work pattern obviously. I mean the wheels of industry would speedily grind to a halt, I think, if there was too much of this going to bed late and getting up late. But it isn't morally wrong to have a different sleep cycle, surely! But the early-birds seem to have morality all on their side.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mm.

**S:** And even public opinion all on their side. Are there any late birds actually present? (*Laughter*)

**Udaya:** I think Purna as well (unclear)

**S:** This happens with a few of our Friends in England. Vajrakumara being a very notable example. Kovida too, if he has got writing to do. But Vajrakumara can work happily half the night, out in the

workshop all on his own, building another boat and listening to the radio and perfectly happy, but then he'll sleep till midday, which isn't conducive to community life. If you've got some people in bed when others are up and some people up when others are in bed, well, that makes community life quite difficult. I think that therefore has to be borne in mind.

**Udaya:** I think there must be some relationship to just natural cycles of night and day that human beings biologically can (unclear)

**S:** One would have thought so but it could be that some people's sleep-cycles were affected very early in life and that it's not strictly speaking, possible perhaps for them to alter them now. Not without great inconvenience, greater inconvenience than it would really be worth.

**Dharmadhara:** It took me about a year or two years, to change.

**S:** I personally am very much an early morning person. I like to get up early. I like to work in the morning. I don't like to work in the evening. I like to go to bed early. I've found in the last year though that has been changing quite spontaneously. I've been finding that I can do more in the evening, and that I can stay up later. I don't know quite why this is, it might be just the onset of old age, but this seems to have been happening. But I'm definitely brightest in the morning, and work best in the morning, and once it's light I don't feel like staying in bed at all. I can't go to bed during the day, I just can't do it, even if I'm not well. I can't go to bed during the day, I feel much better sitting up in a chair. But some people are just the opposite. They just can't function in the morning. I've seen this, I've studied this very carefully, (Laughter) in fellow members of various communities. I've studied it very carefully, at close quarters, that there are some people who quite genuinely are sort of, well, sort of really 'groggy' in the morning (Laughter) Yes! And they just can't do anything in the morning, and it seems almost cruel to sort of insist that they should, you feel you should just leave them. So they get up about midday and they stagger around for a couple of hours and then about three or four o'clock in the afternoon, your tea-time, they've really properly woken up, and then they improve after that, and they reach their peak between about eleven o'clock and about three o'clock. They can do anything then; they can give lectures, they can study, they can do anything then (Laughter) and they also say that - I don't know this from experience - but they also say, they also tell me, that such activities are particularly enjoyable during those hours because everybody else is asleep, it's so quiet, no disturbance. There are no visitors, no one is likely to come and interrupt you. You can just get on with your own little thing. I don't know, maybe it's slightly, just ever so slightly, infantile? This business to play just by yourself and not be disturbed by anybody; but you can certainly, if you are the late-bird sort of person, you can certainly get on with a lot of work very satisfactorily in this sort of way, because you aren't disturbed during those hours.

**Geoff Byng:** I believe that actually, generally with regards to humans, that their senses are - the sharpest time of day for the human is about two to three o'clock in the morning, as far as senses go, hearing and sight.

**S:** I'm not sure about that. For most people the dullest time of day in every respect seems to be between about two and four in the afternoon.

**Ian:** It perhaps has something to do with whether you've had a meal or (unclear)

**S:** Or not having a meal even ...

**Ian:** Or not having a meal even.

**S:** But according to the Ayurveda it's something to do with the ascending and descending 'prana' or vital force that, you know, the vital force is in the ascendant until about midday, and then it starts going down, uh. Then it picks up again in the evening. This is what they say, the sort of explanation they give. Whether it's an explanation or only describing the phenomena itself in different terms is difficult to say, but they do say that. But I noticed on the retreats, don't have meditations in the middle of the afternoon. No. Have a work period in the middle of the afternoon. That's best. And even study, it's not really the best time for any (unclear) in the middle of the afternoon. People are really sluggish and tend to doze off, if you're not careful.

**Udaya:** That's how siestas developed.

**S:** Yes, in the hot countries, yes.

**(End of session - Next session)**

**S:** How far did we get? We had finished with sleep hadn't we? The next one was, "*So long as the brethren are not given to company, not delighting in company, not devoted to company*", - So what does one think 'company' means here:

**Dharmadhara:** Socialising.

**S:** Socialising, but in what sort of way? Does it mean that social life outside the strictly dharmic context is altogether prohibited?

**Purna:** (unclear) relationship I think you were talking about once, almost gregariousness to a neurotic need for others.

**S:** Yes. Right! Because it says - 'given to company, not delighting in company, not devoted to company.' So this suggests the attitude of the person who is neurotically dependent on the company of other people; who is unable to be alone; who couldn't even think of going off on a solitary retreat perhaps. One has to be quite careful sometimes, because one doesn't cease to be gregarious or one doesn't altogether escape the danger of gregariousness, just because the occasion may be labelled, so to speak, 'spiritual'. You see what I mean? There is certainly a place for ordinary social life, but there's no place really for a sort of mindless, neurotically dependent gregariousness. I mean, quite often you find that people want to be with other people, not because they like them, sometimes they dislike them, but because they cannot bear to be alone. It is less painful to be with other people than to be alone, which is not exactly a compliment to the other people.

So this is escapism in the strict sense. The fact that you're with other people enables you to escape from yourself. You may even think you are being yourself, you may become sort of noisy and talkative and excited in the company of other people, and others may think that you are really relaxed and being yourself but actually it is not the case, it is all a big act. You're really trying to escape from yourself. But perhaps this is the place to consider what part exactly what one might call healthy or reasonably healthy social life, plays in one's individual spiritual development.

**Achala:** I often thought it was a bit severe, I think there is a quote from the Buddha that you should talk about the Dharma or nothing -

**S:** Because he was addressing very fully committed people: either talk about the Dharma or nothing, you know, maintain an Aryan silence. [Pause]

**Achala:** One would have to interpret 'Dharma' in a wide sense.

**S:** The context of the discussion was of course 'speech', and he was of course, as far as I remember, rebuking some of his followers for indulgence in all sorts of modes of wrong speech. So perhaps he was being deliberately severe on that occasion. But all the same, it gives one food for thought. But if one is seriously committed to the Dharma, all one's voluntary activities will have some bearing on the Dharma, if not directly, certainly indirectly. So what place or what function do you think ordinary social life has in one's spiritual development, or in the life of someone who is, or who professes to be, devoted to his spiritual development? What does one mean by social life? What would be acceptable, what would not be acceptable? Going to a party and getting drunk, would that be acceptable? Or not? Where does one draw the line? Would one go to a party at all?

**Ian:** Possibly. It depends on who you are. Going to a party, personally, it would be OK, but not getting drunk, because even at a party you could use the opportunity to spread the Dharma, even it was just by the way you acted, whether you did, whether you were the only one who didn't get drunk there, and they ...

**S:** If you were the only one who didn't get drunk chances are the others wouldn't even notice. (Laughter)

**Ian:** Yeah. Yeah. Maybe not literally.

**S:** Instead of thinking you were a good Buddhist, they might think rather different thoughts about you.

**Ian:** Yeah, well, they could do. Maybe just one or two.....

**S:** Or even if they thought you were not getting drunk because you were a Buddhist, they might think that Buddhists are unfriendly, stand-offish, unsociable sort of people.

**Ian:** Well by the rest of your behaviour you could (unclear)

**S:** I rather doubt whether people at a party would be in a position to appreciate it, [Laughter] even if they weren't drunk.

**Geoff Byng:** It might be a welcome release for you, possibly.

**S:** Welcome release? Well, if you've been following the path of the Dharma skilfully and wisely would you need that sort of release? I mean, why does one need that sort of release? What is one releasing?

**Geoff Byng:** There is always a possibility that you might have been going through a difficult patch in your Dharma-following.

**S:** That could be, but, I mean, does it help to release, and if so, release what, in that way? Perhaps you could go for a good walk. Do some jogging (Pause) So what does one mean by 'social life' uh? If one speaks of 'social life' in the context of the spiritual life or one's development as an individual?

**Dharmadhara:** If you can be yourself, rather than act a role at a party.

**Ian:** Socialising with other spiritual people.

**S:** Well, you can sort of socialise with other spiritual people or with other people on the same path, without necessarily talking about the Dharma explicitly, all the time, but at the same time your contact with one another is tinged with your common, albeit unspoken dharmic interests.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Yes.

**S:** But perhaps it would be difficult if you are really committed to the Dharma, to enter fully into social life with other people who have no interest in the Dharma at all. I mean, more and more of what they did would surely seem quite meaningless.

**Ian:** You'd probably feel less and less need for it, (unclear) One could spend more and more time with your spiritual friends.

**S:** Yes. Who are much more fun anyway (Laughter)

**Ian:** You have much more in common with them, that's what friends are.

**S:** Um.

**Geoff Byng:** (unclear) have a situation in certain places in England, and definitely in many places in New Zealand, where your sample isn't big enough for socialising. You don't have a big social group of FWBO Buddhists.

**S:** Yeah.

**Geoff Byng:** There is always that 'hippopotamus' analogy. I think that -

**S:** What is this hippopotamus analogy?

**Geoff:** Oh! Rhinoceros. I beg your pardon.

**S:** You mean wandering alone?

**Geoff Byng:** Yes. If you can't find any (unclear), but I personally wouldn't fit to that.

**S:** Well, sometimes it could be a very difficult choice. Either to remain on your own, or to socialise with people with whom, really, perhaps, you didn't have very much in common. It would depend how great was your need to socialise, or how great was your capacity to be alone in a positive sort of way. But that would be a very difficult to have to make.

**Udaya:** I used to find sometimes, especially, initially after living in a men's community, that every now and again I'd almost crave a little bit of social life. So I'd go to town, or go somewhere, or go out with the idea of socialising, and get quite disillusioned with the whole thing and come back anything but satisfied, and realise that the whole thing was just so hollow anyway. And I find that the only thing I can really enjoy that is remotely social now is maybe going to see a movie. But even there I've got to be incredibly careful about what I see. It's usually got to be something relatively 'light' or Science Fiction or something like that. Otherwise I find it has a draining effect, or I come out feeling soiled. So from my point of view, my living situation has become more total, I find the whole thing of social life is, well, it almost seems mutually exclusive, and I don't think I'm really missing out on anything at all.

**S:** Well, in the case of social life in the conventional sense, one probably isn't. It does seem a pity that when one has friends with the same dharmic interests, that you should get together with them and socialise in the same sort of mindless way that one might formerly have got together with other people. So even when socialising with one's spiritual friends, and no doubt that is acceptable, one has to be very mindful that it doesn't slide into a sort of gregariousness, and lose its sort of dharmic content, which doesn't mean you have to be consciously talking about the Dharma all the time. You might not, in fact, do that at all, on certain occasions, but nonetheless, you aren't sort of mindlessly socialising.

**Udaya:** In terms of contact with other people, generally, I find contact with people who aren't into the Dharma, a little bit draining anyway, but other, as it were, brothers and sisters in the Dharma as it were, I tend to feel much better about the type of contact where I'm usually working with them. In some class or something.

**S:** But you have to be careful not to try to 'spiritualise' the socialising, in an artificial, self-conscious way, yeh. I mean I sometimes have found in the past, people doing that. For instance they might become conscious that they haven't been really very Buddhistic, they've been a bit carried away, have become a bit mindless, so they try to sort of bring things back on to a more 'dharmic' plane, by asking, for instance, if I'm present, they'll ask the question like "Well, what do you think Nirvana really is, Bhante?" (Laughter) Then suddenly you try to bring the conversation or the occasion back on to a dharmic level, well, in such a clumsy way, or in such an artificial way that it just defeats its own purpose. So that's the sort of other extreme.

**Geoff Byng:** I don't know about this thing about not having things in common. It seems to me that if you're associating with say reasonably positive, creative people, you have a lot in common with them, even if they aren't Buddhists and might have different interests.

**S:** Yes, but then this would be at least heading in the direction of the Dharma, if there was a genuine cultural or artistic interest. It wouldn't be 'socialising' in the ordinary sort of social sense.

**Ian:** There is also a gross sort of socialising.

**S:** I mean, supposing you went to a party where someone sort of caught hold of you and insisted on talking about rugby football the whole evening. You wouldn't find that inspiring or uplifting, you would probably get thoroughly bored. You might be able to talk about it for a little while, but not for very long.

**Ian:** Maybe you could lead it on to something connected with the Dharma.

**S:** Devotees of rugby football as a way of bringing the conversation back to their particular subject.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Especially in New Zealand!

**S:** I mention this because I had a little experience of that sort of thing on my last visit to New Zealand. Travelling by train I happened to get sat next to someone who was apparently a loyal supporter of the "*All Blacks*", I believe they were called. So he insisted on talking about them, or telling about them, for the whole time I was sitting next to him, which was several hours. [Laughter] I assure you I couldn't get a word in edgeways about Buddhism. [Laughter] I doubt if he would have understood me, even so, if I had. I think very often in socialising, people are almost deliberately looking for a distraction, that the 'spiritual life', using the term in its widest sense, has become rather

difficult, or they are coming up against aspects of themselves they don't really like to face, or they feel it's just too much making all this effort, they just sort of let things slide, let things go, and they just almost deliberately go looking for distraction. I think this is quite a dangerous sort of thing to do. It's alright if one just feels like having a sort of breather, go off for a walk in the country, or you listen quietly to some music. That's another matter. Have a breather by all means, you can't be making a strong effort all the time, you know, in the case of most people. But don't just go in search of distraction. That's the great danger (Pause) Or sometimes, in London, within the Movement, not so long ago even, sometimes one could almost tell when there'd been a party recently. There were a few people were very keen on having parties and giving parties. You could almost tell when there'd just been one, because of the effect it would have on so many people, those who had been around. Very definitely, some were very disruptive (Pause)

**Dharmadhara:** The local Sri Lankan Buddhists meeting - organisation - have meetings about once a month, and they tend to be more of a socialising aspect than a spiritual practice. But they are making moves towards meditation in about a year.

**Achala:** It's a bit slow.

**S:** Um.

\_\_\_\_\_ : A bit cultural.

**Geoff:** That is the case with our association with people who, in our terms, aren't really so into it, have benefitted I think (unclear)

**S:** But, sometimes, it's a question of priorities. Sometimes "the good may be the enemy of the best." A group of, say, Order Members, might have a very happy time together, maybe talking about football, but perhaps you would be better employed, since you are together, just trying to go a bit deeper than that. I think that is the danger there. But on the other hand one doesn't want to strain oneself. One doesn't want to force anything. So it's not a very easy sort of middle path to follow sometimes. On the one hand not being really distracted, and undoing what one has already done, but on the other hand not making a forced or artificial sort of effort, keeping a fine balance between these two.

**Ian:** If one is maybe quite interested in something like a sport, say football, for example, because of one's past and how one was brought up, would you think that there is any danger in following that interest? It seems to me, talking of myself, I am interested in football - soccer. Not as interested as I was though, I find the intensity is not so great, but I'm still interested, but I find it gradually goes, but I'm still interested, but I think actually it will become a fairly minor part, I'll almost forget about it.

**S:** It depends very much what is the nature of that interest. If someone was to be interested in the sense of being actually physically involved I would say that was better, but if you're just going along and watching, well what is the point of that?

**Ian:** Not actually watching, but just looking at the results, seeing so-and-so's won, or so-and-so's lost, and um....

**S:** Well, that in a way is even more interesting. Why does one have this interest? I mean, this team winning, and that team losing, I mean, some people know the scores and the matches for years and years back. Is it anything to do with competitiveness?

**Ian:** It was originally, I suppose.

**S:** Why do men have this interest and not women for instance, as far as I know. or do modern women have it? Do liberated women have this sort of interest?

**Jennine:** I don't! (Soft laughter)

**S:** You don't.

**Ian:** Certain women may. I think it's a sort of cultural thing. It's a sort of man's domain.

**S:** Um.

**Ian:** It is a competitiveness. I'm sure. You're identified with the team from your area, and one of the members of that team might actually come from that area. It's just something you're brought up with, but I've a feeling myself it is dying, and there is still a little interest.

**S:** If it's dying fair enough, watch its death-throes by all means. (Loud laughter) I think it's things like that one has to watch.

**Ian:** I'm aware of it, you know. At least I'm aware of it.

**S:** Not only be aware of it, but understand why one has that particular interest.

**Ian:** Yes.

**S:** If it a healthy sort of outdoor activity in which you actually participate, I would say that's fair enough, because even within the context of the spiritual life, physical activity has its place. You need to keep healthy, and you do have a physical body, so take exercise in one way or another, either by running, or playing football, or going sailing or any of the things you do in New Zealand, I'm not quite sure, going surfing, by all means, because one needs to keep fit and healthy.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Oh yes!

**S:** But, ah, you know the spectator sport, I think is on rather a different level.

**Ian:** Of course, there's not actually the opportunity for you to go and watch soccer, it's just maybe ten minutes a week listening to the results, but if you were going every Saturday, or three times a week or something....

**Purna:** It seems to be a quite strong thing in England. I remember with Order Members, this fascination with football.

**S:** A few of our Friends do have this quite strongly. At least the interest. They like to know the results - who has won and who has lost and (Laughter) by what. I mean, I've even known some people in the middle of retreats, you know, [Laughter] try to find out from someone who's been listening to the radio, what the latest football results are. Yes, I've even known that. I've even known a leader on a retreat share that sort of interest.

**Udaya:** (Obscured by his laughing)

**S:** I think in the case of football I think it must be connected somehow or other with this question of competitiveness.

**Ian:** National or local pride.

**S:** Maybe it's sort of territorial, uh.

**Ian:** Oh very much so, especially in the area I come from. Liverpool is a very strong football area.

**S:** You must be like the robins. Robins are very territorial (Loud laughter) Territorial instinct. You know, there have been books written about this sort of thing recently, you probably know. What's the - there was a book, is it "The Territorial Imperative"

\_\_\_\_\_ : (unclear)

**S:** So we just have to watch these things. It doesn't mean that we automatically just stamp on them. But at least watch and try to understand them, and see what part they play in our lives. You might even try to develop them in a positive, healthy sort of way. One doesn't want to rule out even competitiveness, in a sense, perhaps it does have its part to play in people's lives. Perhaps it can be used in a positive, skilful, healthy kind of way. I'm not ruling out that possibility. But clearly it mustn't exceed a certain point. Maybe even competitiveness can be just a sort of technique for stimulating oneself. Getting one's energy moving.

**Ian:** I think one does have to be careful, though.

**S:** You just mustn't take it too seriously. I remember there was a cartoon once, I think it was in some sort of club, what was it? There was - apparently there'd been some football match and a team had lost of course and there was one person who was very red in the face and looking very confused and embarrassed and all the others looking at him angrily, and the caption was, "He says, "Never mind! It's only a game." (Laughter) So there's quite a lot of meaning in that. To many people that game is not just a game. A game is the last thing they regard it as. It's dead serious. It's

**Purna:** .... results in a rampage of vandalism.

**S:** So clearly, one mustn't allow competitiveness to carry to that extent, to that extreme. I think the criterion is never allow oneself to become involved in any form of activity, and especially social activity, in which one feels one's sense of individuality becoming diminished. And I think you certainly will find that, if you go, say, to the ordinary kind of party. You only find yourself becoming less and less of an individual, and I think that is the test. But if you can remain an individual, well, that's all right, by all means. Participate by all means, but, ah, you know ...

**End of tape two, tape three**

**S:** ... one finds it becoming blurred, obscured, not to say, defiled. So, "*So long as the brethren not given to company, not delighting in company, not devoted to company*", which doesn't mean that you should be anti-social. One mustn't sort of have a purely reactive attitude towards other people on the ordinary social level, that also isn't bearable.

And then, "*So long as the brethren are not slaves of evil desires*". I think this is pretty obvious isn't it? I mean, harking back to this gravitational pull. 'Evil desires' is rather strong. Unskilful mental states; unskilful volitions. And 'slaves' is rather a strong term, it's very suggestive, in a way, because

this is what people usually are. They are 'slaves' to these things. They think of themselves as free, as able to do what they want, but very often that isn't the case, that isn't their position.

**Udaya:** Coming back to what we were talking about before about being addicted.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Yeah.

**Udaya:** You're slaves to your attachment to it, so you're not free (unclear)

**S:** Um.

Udaya: (unclear)

**Purna:** It seems to be one thing to be a victim of some desire and recognise that you are a victim of some desire, but I often find a strong tendency to rationalise that desire as being legitimate in the circumstances.

**S:** Yeah, Yeah, um.

**Purna:** Which in fact makes it harder to deal with because you won't recognise it.

**S:** Yes. Right. Because as soon as you recognise it then you really are under an obligation to do something about it. It's the doing of something about it that one finds so difficult. (Pause) And don't forget the overall context here, it's the conditions of the stability of the Order. So "So long as the brethren are not slaves of evil desires" -. It's as though the Buddha is not expecting there should be no evil desires present at all. He recognises that, yes, inasmuch as people are not stream-entrants there may well be these evil desires, but one should be recognising them, fighting them, struggling with them, not just letting them have their own way. One should at least not be a slave of the evil desires. If one becomes a slave of the evil desire, then there is no hope for the spiritual community. But so long as its members are fighting the evil desires, and not accepting them, not just automatically going along with them, it's still a spiritual community. (Pause)

*"So long as the brethren are not the friends, comrades and associates of men of evil ways,"*. What do you think the Buddha means here by 'men of evil ways'? Does he necessarily mean highwaymen or bank-robbers? Or do you think he has something more general in mind?

**Achala:** More general.

**S:** More general. So what sort of things? Do you think it's connected with this, 'not being given to company, not delighting in company' - sort of carrying the same thing a stage further isn't it? (Pause) So what would be a sort of modern example, do you think, of being the friends, comrades and associates of men of evil ways?

**Udaya:** I find sometimes, sort of visiting or in some way spending time with somebody who I used to know from my past, who is maybe still into drugs and things like that, and maybe I'm with them at someone else's house or something like that, I can feel a distinct sort of change in the atmosphere, you can really feel the paranoia, and also just the endless mind games that go on, all sort of - are often quite sort of (unclear) one-up-manship among them, and also a sort of exudance of negativity against any sort of forms of sort of authority or establishment. It's really sort of a conditioned view of other people and the world and the 'straight' world, and I find just being for more than a couple of minutes in that situation I really feel defiled and quite drained. I think that could possibly be a

relative example.

**S:** Um.

**Achala:** It seems virtually impossible to stay an individual for a long period, living in that situation.

**S:** And again, this is why the spiritual community is so important, where, if one possibly can, one can even work within the spiritual community.

**Purna:** Though I would imagine that the works 'outside' job situation is very vulnerable to this type of thing.

**S:** Well, some of our Friends in London have (unclear) this, even those who have gone out in teams, where they have had to associate with the others, maybe on building sites whose whole outlook and way of life is totally different.

**Ian:** And even in a business situation you find this feeling that people take it for granted that you make as much money as you can out of your client. Not quite as obvious, but nevertheless evil.

**S:** But what you - but one point you made is quite interesting and that is in connection with going and seeing people that you used to know. The assumption being that one has in the meantime grown or evolved, or developed to some extent, or at least understood certain things, whereas they perhaps haven't; so going back to them, and they sort of seeing you as the old whoever-you-were, and treating you as such, tend to reactivate your old self, which is probably far from completely dead. They're almost sort of obliging you to revert to what you were before and be that. So one might even say that 'the friends, associates and comrades of men of evil ways' - that the 'men of evil ways' are those who oblige you when you are in their company, to be what you were before. Do you see what I mean? Those who oblige you, in order to be able to associate with them, to regress to what you were earlier on. And this is perhaps especially likely to happen with people you knew well before, but who cannot see that you have changed, or that you are at least different, and are not willing to see that you have changed, or sometimes refuse to accept that you have changed. So they behave towards you, they behave with you, they treat you in the way that they used to. And of course one finds this with the family. Very often the family finds it very difficult to accept that someone has changed, even that someone has just grown up, leaving aside the question of Buddhism. I was staying with friends in Sydney, quite elderly people who had a son. They are both sixty-nine, the son is only twenty-five. They had him late in life. But he is married but I noticed they always referred to their son and his wife as 'the children', and one day, my friend, the woman, said to me, "Of course we don't refer to them as the children in front of them, because they don't like it, but of course to us, they always are the children". And this was the attitude it seems, and they seemed not to see anything wrong in this, it was just something quite acceptable that the children just didn't happen to like, for some, maybe, strange reason. But parents and elder brothers and sisters they are very prone to this sort of thing, you know. So far as they're concerned you're always their little Johnny, or their little Mary, and their little Johnny or their little Mary, you will remain, even till you're fifty or sixty maybe. They will not see, they will not recognise, that you have grown up, that you have changed, that you've developed; and many of one's old friends likewise. So sometimes it is very difficult going back to see those people, going back to meet those people, stay with those people, because they insist on dealing with the person that you were ten or fifteen years earlier, or even two years earlier, because even in two years quite big changes can take place. And that makes things very difficult for you. Because it almost drags you back to where you were then. Because some people say that when they go home to see their parents they feel themselves becoming childish and even infantile, because that's the way their parents treat them, and they don't like it, so they tend to stay away from their parents. So here in this

context parents would be 'men and women of evil ways', uh, it's not that they're doing anything morally wrong, in a sense, it's not that they are people who habitually break the precepts, but in just treating you as might have been appropriate to treat you five years ago, treating you in that way now: certainly has a deleterious effect upon you and your development, uh, and it isn't good for them either. It means they are not able to open their eyes to the fact that you have changed.

**Udaya:** There is also the situation I mentioned earlier. The last number of times that it's happened, I've always felt quite immune to the situation, and I've felt afterwards that it's been quite good for me to catch a glimpse of that - not that I go round looking for it - but that it does come up, because I really do get a good picture of the fact that my life has changed quite a bit, and that I have changed quite a bit.

**S:** Obviously it depends on the mood that you're in and how long you stay for, and the extent to which you get involved.

**Udaya:** Yeah.

**Geoff Byng:** (unclear) also apply the opposite conclusion to the movement, that we should always have - I was going to say high expectations of each other, but I'm not sure I like the term 'expectations'.

**S:** Well, high aspirations for one another. I mean, in the same way as it's not a very good thing to be with people who see you as you were, it is a correspondingly good thing to be with people who see you as you could be. If you only allow yourself to be. Who see your potential, and who have confidence in you.

*"So long as the brethren shall not come to a stop, upon the way by the attainment of lesser excellence."* This is a very important general principle. Not to come to a stop. Not to settle down on any particular level and just consolidate your position there. Always to keep on; always to look ahead; always see that there's something more to be achieved, something more to be attained, and never remain satisfied with what you've already achieved, already attained.

**Achala:** When I first read it I thought it was the Dhyanas, but it's much broader.

**S:** Oh, yes, indeed! Yes. This side of stream-entry, if you're not going forward, you're sure to be going back. [Pause] This what was said of Devadatta, that he came to a halt with the attainment of the lower psychic powers, and that was the cause of his undoing, that was the cause of his downfall. He just remained satisfied on that level, which wasn't really a very high level. This is one of the reasons why I sometimes say that the time to be careful is when you're successful. For this reason, and for several others, but in this context, because when you're successful, there's the danger of settling down in that success. If you'd failed, well then clearly you've got some sort of motive to recover yourself, to make up for the failure, but if you have succeeded, well, you tend just to rest on your laurels, very often, and think you need not make any further effort, that your limited success, in a way, exculpates you from making any further effort. And the temptation is that if you achieve anything, to settle down in that achievement and simply enjoy it, instead of passing on to something more, something further, or something higher.

So the Buddha makes this one of the conditions of the stability of the Order, the stability of the spiritual community, that it should not rest at any lesser excellence, that it should be continually progressing, because if it stops progressing, it can only go back, to the extent that stream-entry has not been attained.

So in the same way the Buddha says '*Just so long, brethren, as these seven conditions that prevent decay shall be established, and the brethren are instructed in them, - so long may the prosperity of the brethren be looked for, not their decay.*'

Alright section three. Someone read.

3

*'I will teach you, brethren, seven other conditions that prevent decay. . . .  
So long as the brethren are faithful, modest, and conscientious, of wide knowledge, of ardent energy, of steady mindfulness, and full of wisdom, - just so long may the prosperity of the brethren be looked for and not their decay.'*

**S:** These are sort of general, psychological-cum-spiritual conditions. It may be that these sections got added on a bit later, maybe not by the Buddha himself. The gist of the matter seems contained in what we've already read. But anyway let's go into these in some detail. "*So long as the brethren are faithful, modest, and conscientious, of wide knowledge, of ardent energy, of steady mindfulness, and full of wisdom, - just so long may the prosperity of the brethren be looked for and not their decay.*" Right - faithful. What do you think is meant by faithful in this context? What does it mean to be faithful within the context of spiritual life?

**Ian:** True to the end.

**S:** True to the end, yes.

**Udaya:** Possibly could mean 'Going for Refuge', not just at a fixed point having gone for refuge, but keep on going for refuge.

**S:** Yes! Right! I think this element is contained here, or is suggested here - continuity - that you keep it up, you are faithful. I mean, just as we speak of a wife being faithful to her husband even though he is away at sea, perhaps, for ten or fifteen years, the loyalty is maintained. Do you see what I mean? So faithfulness has this sort of connotation, doesn't it? Not only being true to something but being true to it consistently and steadily over a long period, with your feeling undiminished even by the passage of time. I mean, to quote a classic example of the type I've mentioned of Penelope waiting twenty years for the return of Ulysses. She was faithful during that whole period and rejected the suitors who tried to persuade her that Ulysses had died and that she ought to marry one of them in his place, but no, she wouldn't, she remained faith-full. So this is the sort of connotation the word 'faithful' has. So it means retaining your faith in the ideal, your loyalty to the ideal, over a long period, and despite all difficulties and all discouragements.

**Udaya:** Never losing sight of it.

**S:** Never losing sight of it. Never losing faith in it. A very, very, important quality, because people's minds are so fickle, the object of their faith, you can't call it faithfulness, changes so easily or they change it so easily.

**S:** You can speak of a faithful disciple. You can't speak of a faithful disciple if someone is always flitting from guru to guru, teacher to teacher, a few weeks or a few months with each. There is no faithfulness. So faithfulness implies a sort of steadiness and continuity of devotion. And that implies great depth.

**Udaya:** And also were very often so achievement and result orientated..

**S:** Ah! Yes.

**Udaya:** and often in spiritual development it seems that, you know, results can't immediately be seen, not in the way that we expect, so it's carrying us through these periods which seem to be long, dry periods where nothing much seems to be happening, but nevertheless something may well be happening ...

**S:** Yes!

**Udaya:** ... but not in the way we're looking for it.

**S:** So this is why the faithfulness suggests a great depth of devotion and commitment. It is not easily shaken.

**Udaya:** I mean, you can apply it even to meditation practice itself.

**S:** Yes! Right! (Pause) So the difference between 'faith' and 'faithfulness' should be clear, shouldn't it? Uh. I mean 'faith' is, well, a positive mental event, we know that, but it is not necessarily a lasting one; I mean, you can have faith today but not tomorrow, but 'faithfulness' suggests habit, suggests something, as it were, fixed and settled, something to which you adhere. It suggests a quality of character. 'Faith', you could say, is just an element in your experience, or can be just an element in your experience, but faithfulness is a quality of your character.

**Ian:** You use faithfulness to develop faith

**S:** Yes. Right. Faith-full-ness.

**Achala:** Would that be in the twelve positive links? Faith would be more in the 'faithful' sense rather than just as a passing ...

**S:** Yes. Or to the extent that the positive mental events were part of your usual psychological equipment. Those positive mental events are present in all positive, i.e. wholesome or skilful mental states, but then you are not always in a skilful mental state. Well, put it this way - you are not necessarily faithful because you experience faith, or have faith, sometimes. But if you are faithful, you always have faith. So 'faithful' or 'faithfulness' is as it were sort of further or fuller development of faith itself. It's faith become a part of your character, because it is quite possible for someone to have a great faith and devotion, say towards the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, say, at the time of a Puja or on some other such occasion, but whole days and weeks may pass without your feeling anything of that sort, if circumstances weren't favourable, but if you are faith-full, it would mean that your faith persisted and was continuous through all sorts of vicissitudes. It would be part of your character; you could not but be faithful, uh. Well, 'faithful', certainly the very English term itself suggests that 'faithful' - full of faith. You've got so much faith, you never entirely lose it. It's built into your character. It's not simply that from time to time you experience faith, but lose it in between. No, here, it's a quality of your character itself. You are a faithful person, not a person, who, from time to time, feels faith. Do you see the difference?

When you do feel the faith, it can be a perfectly genuine feeling, but it doesn't go very deep because it doesn't last. It's intermittent. But when you're 'faithful' it means the faith has entered into and sort of permeated your whole character, so that it's always there. You are a faithful person, as I said, not

just someone who from time to time has the experience of faith. So you can really tell there really is a difference between someone who feels faith from time to time, and someone who is faithful. You really notice this with many Tibetan Buddhists. They really are faithful Buddhists. They're deeply imbued with faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. It's not something that they just feel when they happen to go to the temple or the monastery. They feel it, in a way, all the time. It's a quality of their character.

**Ian:** This is necessarily more difficult for people brought up in the Western world who haven't had a background of Buddhism. In other words they have to develop this faith in (unclear)

**S:** Well, I think, frankly speaking, the Tibetans are rather exceptional. I don't see why a person in the West shouldn't develop this. It seems to depend much more on the individual temperament or even. level of spiritual development, than on your cultural background and cultural conditioning. I mean very often people are 'faithful' to other people, 'faithful' in their engagements, 'faithful' in discharging their responsibilities, it's not just a devotional thing. Do you see what I mean? So "So long as brethren are faithful", and I think this can be taken in the 'full' sense here. Not only to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, but to your friends, even to your relations where you have occasion to be faithful. Faithful even in your business, that you keep your work in discharging your business obligations, and meeting your business responsibilities. If you've promised to deliver some goods by a certain date you faithfully discharge that obligation, you are faithful. So "faithfulness" is a very important moral and psychological and spiritual quality. It also implies a continuity of aim doesn't it? It implies you are not easily thrown off course. A continuity of purpose.

**Ian:** One helps the other. If you're faithful in business you're faithful in devotion maybe then. You can't divorce them.

**S:** No! Because you are a faithful person ...

**Ian:** Yeah.

**S:** You are faithful to all your commitments, all your ideals, all the people that you know in varying degrees and various ways. Well, we know that if someone is 'faithful' it really stands out, and if somebody unfortunately isn't very faithful, well, you notice that. Some people are more 'faithful' than others. And you can rely on some people more than you can rely upon others. So, "So long as the brethren are faithful, modest" - what do you think the Buddha is getting at here?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Few needs.

**S:** Few needs. Yes. But also no doubt not putting or pushing oneself forward. Not having an unwarrantedly high opinion of oneself. And don't forget that the Buddha is speaking within the context of the conditions of the stability of the Order, the spiritual community. Modesty, perhaps, is the opposite of what - boasting? Bragging? Competitiveness? All these sort of things. So if there is too much immodesty, and showing off of one's personal qualities within the spiritual community, well, it will disrupt the harmony of the spiritual community, if people are asserting themselves in this sort of way. So modesty, modesty contributes to the stability of the spiritual community. Modesty is perhaps not a very fortunate English word in some respects - I don't know what the original Pali one is here but it might be "hrih" or "hiri". Modesty suggests a certain deliberate self-depreciation, but might say, but certainly that isn't meant here. Modesty, is really a just appreciation of oneself and not exaggerating one's own importance, one's own attainments, one's own qualities. Seeing oneself objectively. It doesn't mean deliberately trying to humble oneself. It doesn't mean that at all. "And conscientious" - this is a bit allied with the "faithful", "faithfulness" represents the spirit of the thing,

conscientiousness is more a matter of detail.

**Megha:** It seems to be having an awareness of consequences that ...

**S:** Ummm! Yes.

**Megha:** ... you are very much responsible for your own actions.

**S:** Yes! Indeed!

**Achala:** Sometimes people say, 'You are too conscientious'.

**Megha:** Yes. It's kind of taken as not a good virtue.

**S:** People can be said to be over-conscientious, when they become sort of niggling in their attention to detail; unnecessarily so. Or when they start worrying and fussing and becoming anxious; then they could be said to be over-conscientious. Or when they do something two or three times over when really once is quite enough.

And then "of wide knowledge" - I think the original here must be *barushuddha* ah, which is sometimes translated "Well-learned" or "having heard much". Here the suggestion is "having heard much about the Dharma", "being well-versed in the Dharma", "being knowledgeable in the Dharma".

**Megha:** Is this not just theoretical knowledge? Is it experiencing?

**S:** I think here the suggestion is more the theoretical knowledge, especially if the original term is *barushuddha* "hearing", "learning". But not in a one-sided sort of way. "Hearing", and "learning", with a view to putting into practice, not learning, not knowledge for its own sake, its own theoretical sake.

**Udaya:** It could be a warning also, maybe, against specialisation in certain areas of the Dharma, or over-specialisation, like you get some schools specialising in sort of just one corner of Buddhism, and they're quite vulnerable in a sense.

**S:** Yes. Yes. (Pause)

And then - "Of ardent energy" - I think we're referring to this a bit more under section four where it is included in the 'seven limbs of Wisdom', which is a better known sort of set, "ardent energy" well, the need for energy is obvious anyway, "of steady mindfulness, and full of wisdom". These are sort of general spiritual qualities which will certainly be helpful to the makings of the stability of the spiritual community, but perhaps don't have any very direct bearing upon it, not so direct a bearing as some of the conditions that have already been mentioned, uh.

**Megha:** Several kinds of qualities of stability aren't there, aren't there?

**S:** Well, qualities of individuals. And if individuals have those qualities, and those individuals are members of the spiritual community - well, it will certainly conduce to stability within that spiritual community. I mean, obviously the spiritual community doesn't exist apart from individuals. The better the individuals concerned, the better the spiritual community. The more the individuals exhibit these qualities, the better will be the spiritual community to which they belong, or of which they are members.

Anyway, let's go on to section four, because this contains a similar series or sequence of qualities, which is a much more standard one, and which has a certain logical order.

4

*"Seven' other (like) conditions will I teach you, brethren ....  
So long as the brethren shall practise the limb of wisdom which is mindfulness, the  
limb of wisdom which is searching into things, energy, zest, calm, contemplation, and  
equanimity . . . so long may their prosperity and not their decay be looked for.'*

**S:** You are familiar I take it with the twelve positive Nidanas. So this is another such series. Not quite so full as the twelve positive Nidanas, but reasonably full nonetheless, and coinciding with the twelve positive Nidanas to some extent. So first, these of course are the seven bojjangas, the 'limbs of wisdom', or 'limbs of Enlightenment', or even 'factors of Enlightenment' sometimes it's translated as. So one can take them, as it were, simultaneously, one can also take them serially, in successive order.

So, "*so long as the brethren shall practise the limb of wisdom which is mindfulness*", well, this is self-evident, the importance of mindfulness in the spiritual life. And this, in this particular series, comes first. The first thing that you must do in the spiritual life, is to be aware of yourself. One can speak here of all four modes of awareness or mindfulness: you're aware of your body and its movements, you're aware of your feelings, you're aware of your thoughts, and you are aware of the Dharma. You are aware of the higher spiritual possibilities. This is the four-fold mindfulness in the establishment of which, the whole spiritual life is sometimes said to consist, uh. So first comes mindfulness, and also mindfulness has this sort of integrating effect, do you notice this?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mmm.

**S:** It brings together all these scattered bits and pieces of the personality, so the development of mindfulness, the development of awareness, is essential to development of the individual. Awareness or mindfulness has an integrating effect. Do you see this?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Yes.

**S:** This is why it's so important, and it's not just a question of practising the mindfulness of breathing, but of being aware of all these different aspects of oneself and in that way, gradually bringing them together into a whole, bringing them together into a stable individuality. It's only then that you can be 'faith-full'. It's only then that you can commit yourself.

**Udaya:** I remember in the booklet, "The Essence of Zen", you're talking about the Five Spiritual Faculties, and, how the first four, or whatever, balance each other out, and then you're saying that mindfulness didn't need a balance because you can't have too much mindfulness, and it sort of keeps the other four all together.

**S:** Right! Otherwise you might even oscillate between 'faith' and 'wisdom' rather violently.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mmm.

**S:** But mindfulness does tend to keep everything together. It's mindfulness that helps make you an integrated individual. Not just a sort of succession of rather disparate selves, superficially linked by the fact that they're associating with a common physical body. Sometimes the fact that people have

only one body creates a superficial and quite misleading impression of - what shall I say - unity, in the personalities. The body, admittedly, doesn't change, but what about the mood or the self which is uppermost, from time to time? If people changed physically, in accordance with their changing mental state, well what wonderful transformations we should sometimes see!

**Megha:** Bhante, some people you can notice more easily than others, that their face changes quite a bit.

**S:** Yes. Their whole demeanour changes.

**Udaya:** After you get to know someone well, you can generally tell which 'self' is on duty.

**S:** Yes! Right! Yeah.

**Udaya:** I know this living for so long with Purna, and, (unclear) with each other, I know when to approach him with something and when to sort of steer clear. [Pause] Everybody finds his own (unclear) (Laughs).

**S:** It's interesting that in some of the suttas the Buddha mentions worlds where there is one mind to several bodies, and other worlds where there are several minds to one body. So in this world as how as most human beings are concerned probably, we can say we've got several minds to one body, but there are other worlds where there are many bodies to one mind. Or perhaps we find in the insect world - perhaps ants and bees are cases of this sort. The bodies are various, but it is as though they had just one mind, and that the individual ants and the individual bees weren't actual individuals, they are more like cells in a body, controlled by a common mind. But perhaps it's useful to think of ourselves just as having several minds, or even several souls. In many primitive people, so-called primitive people - have got this idea of there being several souls in a man. I mean this idea of one soul is apparently quite exceptional. In the West it's probably brought about under the influence of Christian theology, and perhaps classical Greek psychology also. But lots of primitive peoples like the ancient Egyptians, have this idea of multiple souls. That men have anything up to six or seven or even eight souls. Not just one. And this seems to make pretty good sense. The Egyptians believed in at least three, if not four, different souls.

So it is good perhaps to think in this way, because it helps to remind us how unintegrated we are. And it is not that these different selves are to be eliminated, but that all are to be brought together to play their respective part within a total harmony, instead of fighting against one another and replacing one another from time to time. Now one being uppermost, and now another.

**Udaya:** Wouldn't there be some that would be done away with all together?

**S:** There may be.

**Udaya:** Yeah.

**S:** But maybe not all together, even in their case. I mean, the energy that is in them must be reutilised, must be transformed, harnessed. But the fact that we've just got this one body sometimes creates an impression, a quite unjustified impression, of unity of the personality. We have to just follow subtle changes of expression and demeanour and so on, instead of seeing the whole body change as perhaps we ought. We'd ought perhaps to see extra arms and legs sprouting forth.

**Udaya:** Horns! (Laughter)

**S:** Horns and tails and claws and long teeth. Something of that sort. Or even wings! Yes! Or a halo! But unfortunately we don't get all these sort of 'guides' to what a person is feeling, or which particular self is actually on view. We may make a bad mistake, we might think the nice self is on duty, but actually it's the nasty self that's on duty, so we suffer accordingly. So, this first of the seven limbs of wisdom, mindfulness, is very, very important, uh. There's no spiritual life without a well-developed mindfulness, because there is no possibility of faithfulness, no possibility of commitment, unless one is an integrated person, an individual. That comes about only with the help of mindfulness and awareness.

And then "*the limb of wisdom which is searching into things*". This is "dhamma-vicaya". Sometimes 'dhamma-vicaya', this second "bojjanga", is translated as "investigation of the Dharma", in the sense of an intellectual investigation into the Buddha's teaching. That's a quite valid interpretation, but it seems a bit out of place in this context, that is to say immediately after 'mindfulness' and immediately before 'energy'. The context seems to be entirely psychological-cum-spiritual. So 'dharma' also means mental state, so 'dhamma-vicaya' can mean investigation into one's own mental states, or you could say 'introspection'. Because having become mindful, having become aware, seeing your own mental states, you've then got to investigate into them, and sort out which are skilful, which are unskilful, which are to be cultivated, which are not to be cultivated, and so on. 'Dhamma-vicaya' therefore would seem to mean that sort of thing. And this is confirmed by what follows, because what follows is the third limb of wisdom, which is energy, 'virya'.

So what happens, you see, through mindfulness, you become aware of your total self, you bring everything more together, you become more of an individual, and through 'dhamma-vicaya' you are able to see which parts of yourself are unskilful, which are unskilful; which parts you need to eliminate, which you need to develop. So you become more integrated than ever, on higher and higher levels due to this, uh. So then what happens is there's a tremendous liberation of energy because the energy is drawn out of .....

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

**S:** .....(*part missing*) and concentrated in the more skilful selves, or even, you might say, concentrated in this sort of unitary self, this real individuality which is beginning to emerge. So the more the selves come together, the more you eliminate the unskilful and cultivate the skilful, the more concentrated becomes your energy, therefore the more energy you develop. So you see the logic of this sequence? From mindfulness, to investigation of mental states, and from investigation of mental states into energy. You see the progression. And then naturally zest, which is not a very good translated of 'piti' or 'priti'. 'Piti' or 'Priti', this ecstasy which starts bubbling up because the blocked energy, the locked up energy is being liberated, so you feel very bubbly or exhilarated. So you get the idea. You see how it all progresses. But this bubbly state, this state of hilarity and rapture and joy doesn't last very long, or shouldn't last very long, not that it isn't positive, but it has certain imperfections, because it's, as it were, too bubbly, you're wasting a lot of energy, a lot of energy is leaking away.

So then the next step is a process of calming down, which means stopping up the leakages, so that all the energy is retained, so there's the calming down, the *prasrabdhi*, rather a difficult word to say, or *passadhi* in Pali. The calming down of the exhilaration as such, but not with any diminution of the joy and delight. That, if anything, is intensified, and due to this the whole being is unified and becomes harmonious, more and more harmonious on higher and higher levels and this leads you naturally into a state of concentration and meditation, *samadhi*, or what is translated here as 'contemplation'. Your whole being is unified on even higher and higher levels of experience. Here,

dhyanic experience, and then, of course, you become, well, full of equanimity. "Equanimity" here, means something much more than 'equanimity' in the context of the four Brahma Viharas. It suggests a certain insight due to which you just don't waver. Your 'individuality', inverted commas, establishes itself more and more firmly at successively higher levels. You develop a sort of what I call 'metaphysical axiality'. You don't even, sort of vibrate between the extremes of samsara and Nirvana, you don't even think in terms of any duality then. So that's the basis of your equanimity. It's a metaphysical equanimity, not a psychological equanimity.

So in this way the seven limbs of wisdom, the seven 'bojjhangas' lead you up and along the whole spiritual path right up to Nirvana. So it's a very important sequence. It rather abbreviates the sequence of the twelve Nidanas. The twelve Nidanas spells it out in greater detail, and is therefore clearer and easier to understand, but this particular formulation, that of the seven 'bojjhangas', is also very important and very suggestive, and helpful. The important thing is to get the 'feel' of gradual progression, of everything coming together, energy welling up, and a constant movement forward, a constant clarification and a growing delight. This is what the spiritual life should be. It's not this slow, painful process, necessarily, that we were talking about in the morning.

**Megha:** I was just going to say, it seems like it's as though not much effort has had to be made almost, as though it was something that occurs to you from time to time in that direction.

**S:** Well, there is that element, clearly, you know, there is an effort to be made. You need, initially, effort to be mindful. At least you need that. To maintain mindfulness is very difficult, but once you've got on your way, you know, things do become more and more, as it were, spontaneous, especially if you have the moral, psychological and spiritual support of the spiritual friends, in fact of the whole spiritual community. The whole spiritual life then becomes more and more effortless because you are not having to struggle with unfavourable external conditions.

**Udaya:** It almost seems that once you've attained the first state - mindfulness - that after that it's almost like a manipulation or a dancing of your energy, a sort of almost a manoeuvring of it, it's not so much 'work' as such, but, um, just ...

**S:** A management of energy.

**Udaya:** Yeah. It's a sort of like - an example I can think of is like surfing. If things change a little, you've basically still got what you had to begin with, but you're just changing the way in which you're using it slightly, and just basically using the energy of your own psychophysical organism - that your orientation changes as the situation changes, and you develop up through it.

**S:** Well this, in a way, is a quite important aspect of spiritual life. That it doesn't consist, in your sort of forming or developing a sort of rigid personality that remains unchanged under all circumstances, just like a boulder planted firmly in the middle of the stream which is just not moved. But really, it means this constant, natural, easy, spontaneous adaptation to changing circumstances without losing your own integrity. But one can also see from all this, and what you said a minute ago, that the development of mindfulness, the development of awareness is a sort of crucial stage in the spiritual life, isn't it? It's that which seems to set everything else off which seems to spark everything else off. That - just that becoming aware. That developing of reflexive consciousness, self-awareness. Awareness that you are aware. That seems to be the turning-point in the whole process of the Higher Evolution. That seems to represent the means of transition from the Lower Evolution to the Higher Evolution. That seems to be the key, just that becoming aware of oneself; taking stock of oneself.

**Purna:** Sort of looking at it more negatively - I can see a lot of my personal energy tied up in

conflict, which is the sort of reverse way of looking at the integration question.

**S:** Yes! That's true. Therefore as conflicts are resolved, you experience a tremendous access of energy. Yes. I am convinced that a very high proportion of the energy of a lot of people remains locked up in internal conflicts.

**Purna:** But those conflicts, in a way, seem to be different 'souls', or different selves, that can't get on with each other.

**S:** Yes! All they can do is frustrate one another. So they drain your energy away from you. That's why this whole sort of process of claiming, or reclaiming, fragments of oneself, or disowned selves, is so important. So it's the sort of 'conscious self', so to speak, which has to do that. There may be some aspects of yourself which you don't like. To a certain extent you might have broken it off and repressed it, so that it becomes almost autonomous, but you've got to reclaim it, and say, "well, that's me, I own it. I accept it." And develop a positive attitude towards it, however unpleasant it may be. Because only in that way you can integrate it. Only in that way can it lose its negative quality.

**Udaya:** Do you know anything about psycho-drama? I don't know very much about it, but I'm still wondering whether or not that's something similar, or that's what they're trying to do.

**S:** I think it is, in a way. I've only just heard about it from your description of it. But it is a sort of acting out, which as far as I know, helps you to get in touch with 'disowned' aspects of yourself.

**Purna:** One would have to be careful that the 'acting out' was in fact, a genuine being in touch, rather than a head-strong thing.

**S:** Yes.

**Purna:** And that you think you ought to act like this, particularly given to a certain popular situation like an encounter group.

**S:** Right. [Pause] So one can say an important aspect of awareness and mindfulness, is just getting in touch with aspects of oneself, which may even amount to autonomous or independent selves, of which one is not usually aware, and with which one is not usually in touch, and collecting all of these together, and collating them, and then integrating them. I mean there is the noble you and the ignoble you, and the lazy you and the selfish you, and the devoted you and the loyal you and the disloyal you, there's the Buddhist you and the non-Buddhist you, and the anti-Buddhist you, there's the angelic you and the satanic you. There's a little spark of Buddha-nature, too. They're all to be sort of gathered together.

**Purna:** (unclear) you often need other people to be able to point them out.

**S:** Yes. You may need somebody to just take you aside and say, "Well, do you know, do you realise, that every now and then you're sort of taken over by something, and you're not at all yourself, in a way. But of course, in another sense, that is you, another part of you, that you have to become conscious of, become aware of, establish contact with. There might be a very bossy self that takes over every now and then, a quite unpleasant sort of bossy self, which you are quite oblivious to. You may just not realise what is happening, it has to be pointed out to you. Or a very miserable, whining, whimpering infantile self wants to take over from time to time. You have to become aware of that, and establish contact with that self, and feel it, and incorporate it.

**Megha:** But how do you incorporate it, by saying....

**S:** Well, this is me, this is me. I accept it. I accept responsibility for it. Instead of saying, "Well, I just don't know what happened, I mean, it's not my fault. It just happened." Say "well, no, this is something that I do." I've noticed that this is a sort of technique that people have, that sometimes amounts to a 'micchaditthi' - saying that something happens to them, when in fact they've done something, or do something. Do you see what I mean?

**Udaya:** Could you give an example?

**S:** Er, well for instance, you say, "Why didn't you come to the class last week?" Uh. They say, "I couldn't come. I had to do something else". It wasn't that they had to do something else. It wasn't that there was some external compulsion imposing upon them. They chose to do something else. But they don't say, "I decided not to come, I decided to go and do something else", because that means assuming responsibility and therefore having to answer for what they did, so they present it as having had to do something, being obliged to do something, being forced to do something.

**Udaya:** ... out of their control.

**S:** Yes. So they say, "I had to go out", or, "I had to go somewhere else," or "I had to see someone", whereas the truth is they just chose to do it because that is what they wanted to do instead of coming to the class. They preferred to do that, but they don't say that. So they disown responsibility for their actions. In fact they might not even know - they might not even realise themselves, that actually they decided. They might themselves think in their conscious mind that they had to do it; that they had no alternative, that they could not go to the class, not that they chose not to go. You see what I mean, uh?

**Udaya:** Does that sort of tie in with what you were saying in "The Thousand Petalled Lotus", to your Pali teacher. the Venerable Kasha or something like that, about before you can know "anatta" you have to more basically get in touch with yourself, where you are, there's a sort of.....

**S:** I wasn't actually saying that then, I mean, I had in mind a much more theoretical metaphysical context. But it can be applied in that sort of psychological way.

**Udaya:** This is what I was thinking, maybe you establish the feeling of I, at least initially, through all these different selves and then from that feeling of one self ...

**S:** Yeah. You refine it as it were, out of existence. It becomes increasingly more and more transparent, and you start seeing through it, as it were. It becomes more and more diaphanous.

**Udaya:** But you've got to get at least mindfulness to deal with initially.

**S:** Yes, indeed! Otherwise it's like, suppose someone was to come into this room and say, "Look, what shall I do about such and such?" and everybody starts speaking at once and saying different things. Well he'll say, "Well, just one at a time". Or "At least let me go out. You all talk about it and then you just produce a common advice, or a common opinion and then tell me that." It's rather like that isn't it? But very often we have all these different voices speaking within us at the same time; and very often we don't know which one to listen to. But it's really remarkable in a way, people's reluctance to accept responsibility for what they say and do themselves. Especially what they do. So they get into a sort of habit of thinking of themselves as passive, and as doing things because they have to, because that's their 'let-out'. That's their escape route, as it were, to avoid responsibility - "I

had to do it." "I had to go and see somebody", instead of, "I decided to do it", or "I decided to go and see somebody". Have you noticed people doing this?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mmm.

**S:** I think especially in this matter of classes. I don't suppose anyone ever says, "I decided not to come" or, "I decided I really didn't want to come", or, "I decided I'd rather do something else that night".

\_\_\_\_\_ : (Murmurs)

**S:** Hardly ever anybody speaks in that sort of way, do they? It's not even considered very polite. It's, "Oh" I'm very sorry. I couldn't help it. I had to go out somewhere." Yeah?

**Geoff Byng:** That suggests a misinterpretation of your function, you know, that they're trying not to upset you about that.

**S:** Yes, indeed!

**Ian:** If you feel you have to be true to yourself. Really that's the only thing you can say, is to say that I felt that I couldn't come tonight, or I didn't want to, for some reason. It's all tied up with truthfulness to yourself and to other people.

**S:** Yes. There may well be this element of wanting to please somebody else. It may not even be that. It may be that person doesn't mind one way or another, really. But you have a certain built-in reluctance to accept responsibility for what you yourself say and do. And that sort of attitude is almost encouraged by many of the conditions of modern life.

**Geoff Byng:** It's very difficult if you are in a situation where you do feel yourself pressured - to actually deny responsibility. I was just thinking specifically, at the moment, of a certain person who say invites us over, and then we'd have to turn her down, and the real reason is we don't want to go but what are we to do, you know?

**S:** Well, within the conditions of ordinary social intercourse one is not expected to be frank. And there are various polite 'let-outs'. But if people press you beyond the limits of social convention, then I think one is justified, even socially, in being, not exactly rude, but a little frank. You could say to here, "Well, look, we are very grateful to you for inviting us, but please do try to realise we do have our own lives to lead, and it isn't always convenient, or we don't even always want to come". Just say that, frankly. What else can one do?

**Udaya:** Or, "I don't really feel like it tonight... or the next night!" (Laughter)

**S:** Yes. There are few things worse than sort of constrained social intercourse, where one can't really speak one's mind, and where one has to pretend that one is enjoying oneself when one isn't. You can put up with a little of it, but I think if people expect you to put up with too much of it, well then I think the worm is justified in turning.

**Geoff Byng:** Say you have a situation where you are angry, or something like that; so you are feeling anger. If you try and do something else such as like turn your mind to the Dharma or something like that, will that have the effect of pushing the angry self down? Would that be trying to repress the angry self and push another one in?

**S:** I think it depends whether there is really an angry self there, or whether it's a comparatively superficial, passing angry mood. If it's only a comparatively superficial passing angry mood, well yes, you can just, actually get rid of it by turning your mind to the Dharma or something else interesting, which means that the energy that was in the anger goes into the new interest. The energy is not repressed as you put aside the anger, but if you've got what I call this angry self, a more demoniacal you, if there is a sort of permanent anger underneath, as it were, you can't just divert it by consciously preoccupying yourself with the Dharma. You've got to deal with it in a more radical sort of way, and that means getting in closer contact with it, and experiencing it more. I don't want to emphasise this sort of psychological approach because the encounter groups really do overdo it, but sometimes it does happen, and you have to contact and experience the anger that is latent within you, before you can go ahead.

**Geoff Byng:** This (unclear) thing. I find this very confusing, actually. The term a mood in itself.

**S:** It's a difference of degree, but if one looks at one's own experience, one can understand it.

**Udaya:** I think you've got to understand that. A lot of the mental states we experience are often very superficial.

**S:** Yes. You can get very easily out of one mood and into another. I mean, genuinely out of it, not sort of forcibly suppressing any particular self. If you want to get out it, you can, but very often we don't want to.

**Udaya:** Yes. Whereas sometimes you get one and it's really gripping and it's a lot more real. There's a lot more depth and substance to it. It's a real one that's come along.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Real?

**S:** Mmm.

**Achala:** Do you think there'd be more value in going to encounter groups? Somebody who is into Buddhism, perhaps, following some of these other avenues?

**S:** I did consider this at one time but I really doubt it now. I think they can get all that they need from the meditation, communication exercises and contact with the spiritual community. I do know people who have spent years with encounter groups and who don't seem to have got anywhere at all. I think encounter groups encourage you to go round and round in the same circle. Well, actually, what seems to happen in encounter groups, you're supposed to bringing up so much of this repressed material, what happens is you do bring it up - you're standing over a great pit, a great black pit full of all this messy stuff that you have to bring up, so, yes, they bring it up in great bucketfuls, *[Laughter]* but what do they do with it? They throw it over their shoulder so it falls down into the same pit *[Laughter]* and then they have to bring it up all over again. This is what it seems to me, the encounter groups are doing all the time. They are bringing up the same repressed bit of whatever it is over and over again.

**Udaya:** And it's always negative.

**S:** And it's always negative, and they have the impression that they are bringing up more and more of it, but actually they are only bringing up the same old dirt over and over again (*Laughter*) One sees this happening, and it's indulgent, because you love that bit of dirt actually. You are quite happy to

bring it up provided you can allow it to fall back down again so that one has the pleasure of bringing it up again! *[Laughter]* And this exactly describes these encounter groups, or at least, some of them. So you play with the same old bit of dirt all the time because really you love that bit of dirt and you don't want to get rid of it; you don't want to throw it away permanently. So the encounter group enables you to play with it under the pretence that you are trying to get rid of it. They're very self-indulgent in this sort of way.

**Megha:** To a certain extent that you can pay too much attention to those conflicts, in a way, like. Speaking from experience (unclear) these conflicts, and too much energy gets invested in trying to sort it out, whereas in fact you can't maybe sort it out (unclear)

**S:** Yes, you become problem oriented, rather than ideal oriented. But it doesn't mean having a false or artificial ideal, huh, but thinking of yourself in terms of growth and development, and realisation of your own potential.

**Megha:** I think that is really the value of having an ongoing practice which meditation is about.

**S:** Yes.

**Megha:** It enables things like..... you are in less danger of repressing things, I think, when you are practising meditation, because things will come to the surface, but it comes to the surface I think to the extent that you can handle it and incorporate that in your life.

**S:** Um. It comes more gently, more smoothly, yes, this is true, I'm sure. And also there is the point very often overlooked by the encounter group people, that what is repressed is not always negative. Sometimes circumstances oblige you to suppress a great deal that is positive in yourself, a lot of joy and happiness and delight, uh. That often gets repressed. I mean, supposing you are a happy, cheerful child, sort of playing and dancing, and your mother says sort of sourly, "I don't know what you've got to be happy about." *[Laughter]* Well then what do you do? You just - you just repress it all, suppress it all. You sit on it all. You learn it's not 'the thing', it's not proper, as it were, to be happy and carefree. It's not approved of so you repress that side of yourself, your natural, spontaneous side.

**Udaya:** They really do that in primary schools.

**S:** Do they?

**Udaya:** For the sake of discipline. Yes. I've found that. You'd be happy and laughing and joking maybe sort of in a class situation, but often classes like an art period, or something, because they're noisy anyway, but because it's all nice and neat, they want us to be quiet, and they want us to be all neat and sort of orderly, and sort of disciplined, and they say "Shut up and draw the picture!" I used to find that at school. It was a real drag, and I think it does start you repressing this positive emotion.

**S:** Mm. On the other side there is a genuine problem which is that children need to be socialised, at least to some extent. It seems as if it's impossible to do that without a certain restriction at least on their energies, unfortunately. I think they are like little animals. I think even the most idealistic parent cannot avoid as it were, suppressing their child sometimes, even if it's only in the interests of the parents, because parents also have rights, and even (*chuckle*) the schoolteachers have rights. But you know, far too much of that sort of thing does very often go on. People's natural energies are suppressed to a sort of crippling degree. But the point I'm making is simply that there's a lot that is repressed which is positive. It isn't all negative by any means.

**Geoff Byng:** Is that why in children do seem to be so much more energy than adults and old people and so on. It's just a steady process of putting more blocks up.

**S:** I think it is to a great extent. You really notice this. I think in order to socialise the child there must be at least a certain directing, even disciplining of energy, but often it is done so heavy-handedly that the child is just suppressed, and repressed. The child is sort of sedated almost, as they do in mental hospitals with many of the patients, if they are a bit unruly, they just sedate them. (Pause)

So the seven bojjhangas show you very well how the whole process is reversed; you're more mindful, more integrated; gather more energy; the energy becomes more and more exuberant, you feel much more exhilarated, happy, delighted, overjoyed. Then of course you start calming down without any loss of joy; and then you develop a sort of calmness and clarity which gradually gives birth to insight and wisdom.

**Geoff Byng:** So if we perhaps happen to find ourselves in a very sort of bubbly, outgoing, energetic state, should we be very cautious not to sort of waste that in sort of indulging in -

**S:** It is a quite a positive state, but it's still a mundane state and can therefore take an unskilful turn. You find that when people are very happy, first of all they are sort of happy, then they start getting 'hilarious', I think that's the correct term here and then they start losing their mindfulness - they start getting carried away ...

\_\_\_\_\_ : Yes. Frivolous.

**S:** Frivolous! Then they might start doing foolish things, or behaving recklessly, and then disaster might happen. So when you find yourself becoming hilarious, you must be very careful not to get carried away, and this of course is sometimes what happens at parties, isn't it? You get very jolly, you get very jovial, very happy, but you then start getting unmindful, and you get carried away and you do all sorts of foolish things, even without the drink.

So also another thing, on a more worldly level, that often goes to people's heads is success, uh. You become successful, then you lose your caution, you lose your mindfulness, and you may do something rash and you make a mistake, and then it's the downward path for you very often. So beware when you're successful! That's the time to be really mindful and careful; otherwise your success may go to your head, you may get carried away. There's no such danger so long as you're unsuccessful. This is what the Greeks called 'hybris'. Have you heard of this? It's a peculiar sort of pride. It's the pride to which you are especially liable, especially susceptible, when you're successful. And the sign of this pride is that you start getting grand ideas about yourself; ideas which are displeasing to the gods - in Greek mythology - because you start putting yourself almost on a level with the gods. So there is, for instance the example of the very skilled musician who became so intoxicated with his own music and so wrapped up in it, and so proud of himself, he said, "Ha! Ha! I can play better than Apollo", so Apollo heard, and there was disaster. Or there was the mother who had so many children - I think it was, a dozen children - and she was so sort of exhilarated by this that she started scoffing, saying, "Huh (*unclear Greek name*) has got only two children" (*the same Greek name*) being an important goddess) who had these two children, Diana and Apollo) (*name*) has got only two children, I've got a dozen. But (*name*) overheard and she was very displeased, so she called upon her two children, who just shot all twelve of Niobe's children dead with their arrows. So these are examples from Greek mythology that you can get carried away by success, and overcome by 'hybris', which brings about its inevitable nemesis. So watch the moment of success. Don't get intoxicated! And be careful when you're feeling very, very happy and jubilant, and exhilarated. You can very easily become unmindful and start just larking around and doing all sorts of silly things, and

before you know where you are you've broken your mother's best vase, or you've put your elbow through the window, or you've broken someone's arm, or something like that, or smashed something up. Or you've said something which afterwards you regret. Something which just came up in a moment of silliness, but which has implications you didn't stop to consider, which seriously upsets somebody. This may happen.

But that's not to say that that sort of joy and exuberance is wrong. It only means that as that feeling increases, you just be careful to retain your mindfulness. We used to see this very much on retreats in England in the rather early days. The whole retreat used to oscillate between two contrary states. What would happen would be that when people arrived - and don't forget in those days, in England, most people, even Order Members, had full time jobs - when people arrived on the retreat - Sunday evening usually - they'd be pretty tired after the week's work, a bit withdrawn, and not very open, but come Monday or Tuesday they'd have opened up, and be rather happy and outward-going, and their energies would start getting liberated and they'd start becoming a bit unmindful, so then we'd have to do something to correct that. We usually have more silence, or introduced some silence, and that would calm them down, but then they might get cut off from their energies again, they might have to repress their energies in order to be mindful, so we had to open them up again with communication exercises, so back that way they'd go. But then after a while they might become a bit unmindful again, so again we had to have a bit of silence, but by the end of the retreat we usually managed to have established a balance, a harmony, and have people with high energy, but retaining their mindfulness. It's very difficult to have the two together. It's very easy to be mindful, but in an alienated sort of way by inhibiting your energies. It's also easy to let your energies rip and forget all about your mindfulness. But to have both together - to be full of energy, and at the same time completely mindful - that's the secret. That's what is desirable.

**Achala:** Which would you say - well not that you can very easily say one is harder than the other - but would you say for most people it's easier to be happy - for the general public - than mindful?

**S:** Yes, very likely, especially if they've had a drink or two. And sometimes even that is necessary sometimes. Some people open up in no other way. I'm speaking on a very ordinary, worldly level, not on the level of the positive group, even.

But maybe that is the characteristic of a real spiritual community. You could say that whereas in the positive group there is lots of energy, and positive energy, but not much mindfulness, perhaps; in the spiritual community there is this balance of energy and mindfulness, and it is this, among other things, that makes it a spiritual community. It's very buoyant, it's very lively, there's a lot of happiness and joy around, but there's a lot of awareness and mindfulness, too, equally balancing the joy.

**Udaya:** I work full time in a working situation, a livelihood situation in the community is good for that, because in a sense you've got to be mindful by the nature of what you're doing generally, you know, you've got certain responsibilities to the job, but at the same time you're working with others and your energy is flowing in the same direction, so it's quite good at maintaining that balance.

**S:** Yeah. Yeah. Mm.

**Udaya:** It's very much the ideal situation.

**S:** Yeah (Pause)

**Megha:** I've come up against the thing when talking about work - full-time work - and/or being

involved in a spiritual livelihood - community livelihood project - within myself as though I'm rejecting those outside, that to say it is better within the spiritual community is as though I'm rejecting ...

**S:** You could look at it the other way; otherwise you're rejecting members of the spiritual community. You have to choose. I think maybe this is the result of a sort of feeling of guilt induced by one's education and bringing up generally, that you ought to be useful, and that even religion ought to be useful in a sort of social and material sense. You see what I mean? I think we talked about that on the other study retreat, didn't we?

**Udaya:** Yeah.

**S:** Religion, to use that term, is obliged to sort of subserve material ends, to justify its existence.

**Udaya:** People kind of blackmail you and say ...

**S:** Right!

**Udaya:** "What if everybody did that? What are you doing for society?"

**S:** Yeah. Right. Hegel is credited with a quite famous remark with regard to philosophy, but it parallels religion here - he says, "Philosophy bakes no man's bread". It's a useless subject from a practical point of view, but there has to be these 'useless' subjects, because, we're not confined to material life, to material usefulness. We don't have to justify ourselves in those terms - at least, not to ourselves. We may have to, to other people, as a sort of skilful means for the time being. Say, "Oh, yes, meditation is really useful, it helps you develop peace of mind, and you can manage better in that way." But that's not the real answer. The real answer is that meditation helps you to develop as an individual (Pause)

And also there is the question of how best can you make a contribution to society? Not because society demands that you should but because you want to, if you want to. Well, the best way, surely, is by strengthening the spiritual community, because it's only the presence of the spiritual community within the positive group, that enables the positive group to be a positive group. So really that is the best contribution that one can make to society at large - to help maintain the existence of spiritual communities. That's the real hope for the world, I think.

**Ian:** Sometimes (unclear) but they do seem to feel that you do have to be doing something physical to be helping people.

**S:** Yes!

**Ian:** Assuring them that you're helping by physical - by donating money, or something that the spiritual side doesn't have any - maybe have never heard of it.

**S:** Well, one can understand people not being able to see that, one just has to be patient and try to explain it, and also make quite sure that oneself is not just enjoying an easy 'let-off', as it were.

**Udaya:** Also, as you were saying in last week-end's study that people put up things, like the family and society, as an ideal, as something worthy of ...

**S:** Ultimate goals! Yeah. I mean, for instance one might be asked what effect does Buddhism have

upon the family, as if Buddhism stands or falls by that - well, if Buddhism helps support the family, well OK, Buddhism's good. But if it doesn't well Buddhism's bad, so dismiss it. Sometimes people ask - or at least they used to ask, not so much now - whether Buddhism would help them in their relationships. As though the relationship is something fixed and given and ultimate. And the only question is whether Buddhism will help them to maintain that or to support that or not.

**Geoff Byng:** But also we're aware from our searches for right livelihood, that few of even the practical means of support, the practical ways in society are useful.

**S:** Yes. I mean, supposing you are engaged in the cigarette trade. Well, how useful is that? Well, it is harmful, uh. At the same time, on the other hand, one can say there are certain occupations within society which one might follow outside the spiritual community, which are still right livelihood, and which are helpful to the community at large, in a true sense and which may assist you also in your development as an individual. There is that possibility as well. One can't rule it out altogether by any means.

**Udaya:** Like being a doctor for example.

**S:** (*spoken with hesitation*) Possibly. In the early days of 'the Friends', people used to say that they thought being a teacher was about as near as you could get to right livelihood, but all the teachers present used to strongly disagree. (Laughter)

### **End of side tape three, tape four**

**S:** They felt that what they were being asked to do as teachers was to fit children, not to say condition children, to take their places in a society in which they, the teachers, did not believe. And they could hardly see this as 'right livelihood', you see.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mmm.

**S:** It's probably not quite so simple as that, but that is the way in which most of them seemed to see it in those days. They certainly didn't see being a teacher as 'right livelihood', as many non-teachers thought it probably was. Perhaps we'd better end on that note, because it's, believe it or not, already six o'clock.

### **Break**

**S:** Alright we come to section 5 now. Would someone like to read that short ...

5

*'Seven other conditions, brethren, will I teach you that prevent decay. . . .  
So long as the brethren shall practise the perception of Impermanence, of the  
Unreality of Self, of Impurity, of the Besetting Dangers, of Abandonment, of  
Passionlessness, of Cessation, -just so long may their prosperity be looked for, not  
their decay.'*

**S:** Mmm. So you notice these conditions are rather different from the previous ones, broadly speaking. These are concerned mainly with the development of insight, or the development of wisdom, and they're slightly, so to speak, scholastic in character. It may be that this particular set of seven became attached to the other sets of seven at a later date. Because one can quite easily imagine

that if there was any good practice or teaching that anybody wanted to recommend it would be quite easy to look at it as a condition or one of the conditions, of the stability of the Order, because we must realise that the Pali texts, or the Pali - what shall I say - the traditions on which the Pali texts were subsequently based grew up gradually. The sayings of the Buddha were handed down orally, and it wasn't very difficult for them to be added to, in quite good faith, as time went on. So if you had a favourite teaching or favourite interpretation, it was quite easy to include it in what was recited, and what was handed on, and in that way it became later part of the scriptures. So this sort of thing may well have happened here, because you get the Buddha explaining seven conditions of the stability of the Order, and seven more, and then seven more, so it wouldn't have been very difficult later on, to add another seven and another seven, because almost any teaching could be considered as conducive to the stability of the Order. This may have happened in this case; in the case of this particular set of seven. I'm not saying it definitely did, but they are of rather a different character and much more general. Not so very directly related to the stability of the Order. Well, except in one particular respect that we will talk about in a minute.

But anyway, let's go through them. "The perception of impermanence", uh. Now from the context it would seem, that by 'the perception of impermanence' is meant not just the general or theoretical idea of impermanence, but an actual transforming insight into the truth of impermanence. So why do you think that is so important? Or important within the present context at least? (Pause) Assuming to start with that, yes, everything is impermanent. In a sense we know that, though in a sense, we don't. But why is that the perception of impermanence, the realisation of that truth, the experience of that truth, so very important?

**Udaya:** If you don't realise that things are impermanent, i.e. that things are changing, then you won't understand that it's possible for you to change, therefore to grow and develop and become enlightened.

**S:** That's true. Yeah. But also there is the fact that if you don't have this sense of impermanence, you will continue sort of foolishly imagining certain things to be permanent, and therefore continue to be attached to them, or to try to hold onto them, or hang onto them even as though they were permanent. And this will, in the same way, retard your progress. It will keep you back, because you will be under the impression that things can remain unchanged, that they're not going to change; that the things that you like, and the things you are fond of and the things you are attached to, are going to remain just as they are, whether it's your family, your home, your country, yourself. But when you develop this perception of impermanence you see that this is not the case, that everything is changing, everything is impermanent, and this can be quite terrifying at first, because it seems to deprive you of everything, that there is nothing you can hang on to, nothing that you can keep, but in the end you see that there is also a message of hope there, because if everything changes, it means everything can change, you can change (*chuckle*). And not just change, horizontally, but change vertically; change for the better. In other words you can grow; you can develop.

So what at first might have seemed a rather terrifying sort of realisation, a rather terrifying sort of insight, in the end comes to be seen as full of comfort and hope and inspiration. It means that you can grow, you are not limited to - you are not confined to what you are at present, so what a blessing! (*chuckle*) You can change. But it must be a real perception of impermanence, in the sense of a genuine spiritual insight, an actual realisation, which can transform your life, not just a theoretical understanding. So this 'perception of impermanence' is quite important.

**Achala:** Just turning it over - impermanence - in one's mind a lot. Does that help at all or would it need a real transcendental kind of.....?

**S:** I think that turning it over in one's mind certainly does help. It sort of paves the way. I mean the transcendental realisation need not be something dramatic. It can sort of dawn on you gradually, sort of almost quietly and still be transcendental. It doesn't have to come in a very dramatic sort of way. Sometimes people think like that, but not so. And the more you are prepared, in a way the less dramatically it comes, because the less discrepancy there is between your refined meditative state and that insight. The refined meditative state makes you ready to receive that insight in a very natural sort of way. Do you see what I mean? If it's a rather dramatic experience that throws you off your balance, it may not be a transcendental experience. It may be something more on the cruder psychological level.

**Udaya:** I remember, Bhante, once you were saying something along the lines of, "If it shatters, it's real". I wonder if that ties in with Insight.

**S:** Well, human nature is very complicated - sometimes you do get a shattering experience which is transcendental, but this is usually when there is a very strong resistance. Yes, you've got a very definite spiritual side to you, you are making a spiritual effort, on the other hand there is a strong resistance, a sort of brittle resistance, so what happens is, well, when you develop the spiritual insight, the transcendental insight, well, it does have a shattering sort of effect on your rigidity. But if you approach the transcendental experience, or if you just develop your spiritual life, in a sort of calm, steady, regular way, refining and refining little by little, step by step, then, when the transcendental experience comes it will come in a much more natural way, and transform you much more effectively. You will have prepared for it. But it can happen the other way too. But what I'm saying is that a dramatic experience is not necessarily a transcendental experience, though the transcendental experience is sometimes dramatic - usually not so I would say - but it might be. Also there is the point that if you have prepared yourself over a long period of time you are more easily able to retain the transcendental experience and it therefore does transform you to a much greater extent. But if you are not very prepared but you're just, as it were, lucky enough to have a higher kind of experience you just not be able to do anything about it. You have it, and then it's as though you haven't had it; though there will be some change, but not so much, not so deep, as there might have been, had you prepared much more.

**Ian:** Would it be true to say that transcendental experience would maybe come in very short bursts, you may feel just for a few minutes or ...

**S:** It seems that this is what usually happens. You don't sort of suddenly, all at once, find yourself completely enlightened. You get little glimpses at first. You may not even be sure whether they are real glimpses, or whether they are particularly refined mental experiences and theoretical understandings. It may be quite difficult at first just to see where the one ends and the other begins, especially if the one is the vehicle or the support of the other.

But it can happen that while you're just sort of quietly thinking and reflecting and developing a sort of theoretical understanding of the truth of impermanence, then if you are very quiet and very clear, the mind is very balanced, then on the basis of that you may get an actual insight, but not dramatically; - very sort of calmly, quietly, gently. So the turning over in one's mind of the fact of impermanence is certainly quite useful, and especially if one does that in the context of meditation; say after a period of meditation when the mind is very calm, you sort of deliberately start up mental activity, after a period say of no mental activity, you deliberately start up the mental activity, but exclusively on this sort of topic. That mental activity, in view of the fact that it takes place within the context of, or on the basis of, the purified consciousness, can then much more easily act as support for insight into the actual truth of impermanence or whatever else it might be that you are contemplating. This is the classic sort of Buddhist method of 'samatha' and 'vipassana'. (Pause)

So, a preceding practice of 'samatha', of mental calm, experience of the dhyanas, is assumed here. But you can be, even when you're not sort of as it were, formally meditating, not sitting meditating, even when you're just sitting quietly maybe with a cup of tea, just feeling very peaceful and reflective, just turning things over in your mind, one can be very calm and very concentrated, and on that basis, yes, if you reflect and consider in the right sort of way, insight can be developed. You don't necessarily have to be sitting cross-legged in the shrine, officially meditating, as it were. Though of course one may be, and maybe insights are developed more frequently in the shrine than elsewhere, but they are not limited to the shrine. There are classic examples of monks having their illuminations while sitting on the toilet-seat. (*chuckle*) That's an extreme example - or chopping vegetables in the kitchen. Because on such occasions you may be quite calm and collected. Say, if you're just chopping vegetables in the kitchen, well, it's a nice day, the kitchen is quiet and peaceful, the sun is shining, you're just standing by the chopping board, maybe you've had a good meditation, your mind is quite fresh, bright, clear, chopping away, chopping away, and you just think, well, yes, you know, things like this have to be chopped up. Father Time is chopping into our life, it's all impermanent, you can have an actual insight, just like that. It can come all sort of quite unexpectedly. I mean, maybe it's all the more likely to come because, in a way, you are not looking for it. It's something that naturally arises out of your actual experience, it isn't anything artificial. And that is very often how it does come. Or you just see a leaf falling when you're in the right sort of mood, it means so much to you, so much more than lengthy discourses on the impermanence of all conditioned things. You really do see that, yes, that leaf is falling, it's had it's day and we're all like that, and you see it very clearly, and it means something to you, and continues to mean something to you. You are sort of permanently changed, not changed in a highly dramatic way, but your attitude towards life is subtly modified, which means that that experience was an experience of insight.

**Ian:** When one had reached a higher state, presumably this experience would occur more and more often ...

**S:** Yes!

**Ian:** ... and would it therefore become permanently (unclear) if you saw a leaf fall ...

**S:** Well, certainly you ...

**Ian:** (Blurred - speaking at same time)

**S:** Ah you need not consciously reflect, "Ah! the truth of impermanence". No! You just see that the leaf falls. You don't have to sort of consciously make that sort of comment. You see what I mean?

**Ian:** Yeah.

**S:** It's a feeling that's with you all the time. I mean, one can't quite say that you're not conscious of it, you are consciousness, but not in a sort of almost artificial kind of way. You don't have to sort of say it aloud to yourself; you know it without that.

**Achala:** More than just as a sort of a memory or ...

**S:** Yes, it's not just a memory, though of course, you may have a memory of an insight, when the insight is not actually present. But one can also say that to some extent at least, the memory of an insight, is to some extent, an insight. Because how could you even remember it unless you had some sort of contact with it. Even the memory of an insight is of the nature of insight. Maybe not so

powerfully as the original insight itself; but the time must come when all sorts of situations have these subtle associations for you, and not exactly remind you of the truth of impermanence or any other truth, in a sort of a very 'conscious', inverted commas, way, but that sort of subtle reminder is there, and you just see things, but in a natural sort of way. Just like you're aware that the sun's shining, you don't sort of say to yourself, "Oh, yes, the sun is shining". You're just aware of it shining. So in the same way you're just aware that things are impermanent. And your whole attitude is subtly modified accordingly. Your behaviour is modified accordingly. Your relations with people are modified accordingly.

**Ian:** This is a very elementary question. It may seem naïve, but is there not the danger on the lower level, if you're just realising it on the intellectual level, that you might get very sort of dry towards people. If everything is impermanent and nothing matters, if you don't get the transcendental insight?

**S:** Ah! But I did say that there is this question of the 'samatha', the practice of meditative calm, experience of the dhyanas. In Buddhism you have this too. If you just reflect on impermanence, so to say, theoretically, yes, you may end up rather dry in your approach, you probably will, but the Buddhist tradition is that you practise 'samatha', you cultivate 'samatha', and one component of which is the immensely positive emotional state, so that you take up the serious reflection on the truth, say, of impermanence, only when you are in that very emotionally positive state, so then you don't see it as something dry that detaches you from people in a negative sort of way. You see it as something very inspiring, you see in it the possibility of change and transformation for yourself.

**Ian:** It could be rather dangerous if it wasn't counteracted then.

**S:** I think though that somebody who wasn't practising meditation and not seriously involved in spiritual life wouldn't bother to think about impermanence theoretically. If the thought did occur to him he'd probably dismiss it straight away. So I think it is probably the sort of difficulty that isn't very likely to arise.

There are people who have a sort of cynical feeling that nothing is worthwhile, but I think that comes, not so much from deliberate reflection on impermanence, this comes, I think, more from their negative emotional state. And meditation of course could change that negative emotional state.

**Udaya:** I was reminded before when you were talking about continually seeing things which remind you and turning them over in your mind as a result of samatha of a Tibetan thing, of say if your main practice was Tara for instance, that every sound you hear was the Tara mantra, and everything you see was maybe the colour of Tara, everyone you meet is Tara. I was wondering if there was ...

**S:** There is a sort of parallel or resemblance. But I think the important thing is not to be too self-conscious about it, let it come naturally. Because, for instance, supposing you're doing the Tara practice, and you visualise this beautiful sort of turquoise green colour, and you've seen it vividly many a time in your meditation, and then you happen to see a tree, a green tree, and you naturally think, "Oh that colour is just like the colour of Tara." That's alright. But if you just have got this mental idea, "I've got to connect everything with Tara", you see, "This is just like the colour of Tara", and , "Oh, yes, the sound of the motor car passing by is just like the sound of the mantra", though actually you hear something quite unpleasant, but you have mentally just connect it forcibly, as it were - this isn't really what is meant. You see what I mean? It should be a natural sort of thing, again.

**Udaya:** So basically, it's something you see or experience, just because you are permeated with it, not anything ...

**S:** Yes! It should be much more like that. You can sort of coax along the recollection if you like; but if you are experiencing, say, the sound of the passing traffic, or something really excruciating and awful; well it isn't much good to try to tell yourself, to convince yourself, "Well, no, it isn't really awful, it's really the sound of the Tara mantra". This becomes just a sort of purely mental exercise which I think is not what is meant. It's supposed to be more of the nature of an actual realisation which comes spontaneously as a result of your spiritual practice. As you say, you are so much imbued with the feeling and the spirit of Tara, that you can't help being reminded of it wherever you look; whatever you see, sort of sparks off something connected with that. This is when you're in a state of mind which is full of metta because you practise the metta bhavana, you look around, well, people seem so much nicer than they usually do, so much more pleasant, so much more attractive. But that's because you are in that state of mind. But it's not much good not being in a state of mind which is full of metta, just looking around at people and seeing them actually as just a miserable unhealthy, unpleasant, unfriendly lot of people but telling yourself, "Oh, no, I really must love them, and they're really lovely people". Telling yourself that, and you don't really see it, and you don't really believe it. It's a bit like that. You mustn't just artificially or forcibly make that sort of connection, or that sort of application (Pause)

We talked a bit about the perception of impermanence in Auckland, didn't we, in connection with the deva realm? Do you remember?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mmm. Yes.

**S:** Because in 'the wheel of life' there are these five or six segments, and in each one of them there is a Buddha, or rather, Avalokitesvara in the form of a Buddha, and each of these Buddhas has a specific function in his particular segment of 'the wheel of life' and he's trying to lead the beings of that segment, of that sphere, that world, on the spiritual path. So in the world of the gods there is a white Buddha who appears playing on a lute, on a vina, and what does he play? He plays the music of impermanence we're told, because in heaven, in this heavenly devaloka everything is lovely, everything is beautiful, everything is pleasant, everything is sweet, so people are very attached to it, they don't want it to change. Perhaps they don't even think it can change. So because of that, because they're so settled there, and so happy and so comfortable and so established, in this deva world, they've no perception of impermanence and they need to be awakened; so they need to see that everything that they enjoy is impermanent, it won't last, so the Buddha plays the music of impermanence. So we were saying in the course of discussion that New Zealand is a bit of a deva realm, because you've got everything so comfortable here, and everything so pleasant. Even the weather - at least in some parts. (Laughter) It's so beautiful. You've got all these sunny shores and these lovely golden sands, waving palm trees and pleasant sun-browned people. Jobs easier to get, money easier to come by, for those not on the spiritual path, that is, (Chuckle) So New Zealand, itself seems, in comparison to some parts of the world, certainly in comparison with India, quite a sort of devaloka. So when you're living under these very pleasant, comfortable, easy, material conditions, you're less likely, perhaps, to think about spiritual things, or rather, to think seriously about life, and the meaning of life. Everything is so easy; you've no incentive to think seriously about life. So how does one put across the Dharma to people like that? Well, the answer seems to be you just play the melody of impermanence on your lute. You try to get people to see, "Well, it isn't all going to last". And "You are also going to grow old one day, and where will you be then." So this seems to be a good approach in the devaloka.

In India they don't need reminding of this. They see illness and death and poverty around them every day. You've only got to take a stroll through the bazaar, and you're almost certain to see a corpse being borne along on a sort of stretcher just as in the old days, out to the cremation ground. You can almost guarantee it; people dying around you sort of night and day. Well, almost the first thing I was

told when I arrived in Pune, was that one of our Mitras had died. I mean, I don't remember having a mitra die in England the whole time that I've been there, since I started the FWBO. We've never had an Order Member die. We've had one or two very distantly connected Friends die, one or two at the most. But as soon as I arrived in Pune, I was told one of our Mitras had died. He'd died quite suddenly. He'd been on a week-end retreat; then towards the end of the retreat, he felt he wasn't very well, he said, thought he wouldn't stay till the end, went home, two days later he was dead. So this sort of thing happens in India. And you often get small children dying. So people don't need to be reminded of impermanence there. Or they lose their job, they're out in the street, they're destitute. So these reminders are round you all the time.

So in a pleasant place like New Zealand these sort of things are very unlikely to happen. I mean you're not very likely to go down into the city and actually see a corpse being carried through the streets with its face uncovered. You only see corpses if you're a medical student or a nurse or something like that. Ordinary people don't usually see them. Even if someone dies in your own home, well, usually of course they die in hospital, you call in the undertaker who quickly removes the body and it's kept in the undertaker's chapel-of-rest or whatever they have; and more often than not most people just won't see that dead body, they'll just hear that so-and-so has 'passed away', and the body has just sort of disappeared into thin air, and you just see the coffin. Sometimes you don't even see that, it's sort of hidden by the flowers.

So in places like New Zealand, perhaps, where the standard of living is reasonably good, and people have a reasonably happy, comfortable life, they need to be reminded of the truth of impermanence. Also, I mean, one need not stress the so-called negative side too much, the doom, destruction, death, decay side. I don't know if you ever saw a poem which had that refrain? A friend of mine, a very worthy English Buddhist monk, called Bhikkhu Kantipalo was fond of writing little poems and verses, and he wrote one poem on the spiritual life, each verse ending with this refrain, "Doom, destruction, death, decay." So all that's true, but it's a bit one-sided. So it isn't just a question of telling people, "Well, they're going to grow old and they're going to die, and what are they going to do about it, but also talk to them even in terms of change and transformation. Say, yes, you've got a happy, comfortable life. Yes, you've got a good job. Yes, you've got a lovely wife. Yes, you've got beautiful children, but there is something more than this. You can do more with your life, you can have a much happier, a much more blissful life if you practise meditation, or if you really do see the truth. You can also approach it in this way, pointing out higher and higher possibilities. Maybe not even speaking directly in spiritual or Buddhistic terms - maybe, to begin with, cultural terms, "Why don't you take an interest in classical music", or "do you realise what there is to be gained from poetry?" Something like that. Just trying to make them see they haven't reached the acme of human development, even though they do live in New Zealand, that there are further and higher possibilities of human development beyond what they've already achieved. So this will be a more sort of positive way of putting across the truth of impermanence. Though it might not be a bad idea to touch upon that so-called negative side from time to time, as well. Say, "Well, how do you think you'll feel when you're old and your life is behind you? Will you feel you have really achieved anything, having worked in the same job for thirty years and brought up two or three children, how will you feel? Will you feel that that is enough for a human being to have done? Or will you perhaps wonder what you have done with your life, and whether it's been worth it after all?" One can talk in that sort of way. But in one way or another it would seem that the truth of impermanence needs to be stressed in the case of those who live in some kind of deva realm.

One can see in India, very clearly, how the teaching of emancipation from suffering could appeal in the Indian context. There really is suffering around, and it's very easy for them to look at spiritual life in that way. If you were to talk to a New Zealand audience about the spiritual life in terms of liberation from suffering, it would be almost meaningless, wouldn't it? Because so little suffering is

actually experienced. I mean, taking the word 'suffering' in the more ordinary sense. In another deeper sense it's being experienced all the time but people aren't aware of it, and perhaps can't be expected to be aware of it.

So here one has to speak, perhaps, in terms of further and higher development, and here perhaps the teaching about the Higher Evolution of Man is useful. Have you found that to be useful, anybody?

**Achala:** Some intellectual types seem to get caught up in it.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Yes.

**Purna:** I sort of personally find that this principle of growth and development, without mentioning Higher Evolution as such - Higher Evolution - well, the words 'Higher Evolution' seems, sometimes that some people get (unclear) the wrong way. They tend to think in terms of Darwinian evolution.

**S:** Mm.

**Achala:** It certainly does seem though, that New Zealand's pervaded with this complacency thing, and that's the main thing (unclear)

**S:** I couldn't help noticing it coming from Sydney. It hasn't anything to do with the Centre, or the Buddhists I met, but just to do with the general feel, the general atmosphere of Auckland itself, and perhaps of New Zealand itself to some extent. One seemed to be wafted into a quiet but pleasant, I don't know whether I dare use the word, but almost sort of 'backwater'. (Laughter) You know what I mean? It's like a quiet pleasant lagoon rather sequestered and a bit idyllic, but ...

**Udaya:** Not too many lotus blossoms ...

**S:** (Laughs) It's a bit sort of, not exactly, cut off, but you know what I mean?

**Purna:** I think it's quite a strong impression when you come back from overseas.

**S:** Ah!

**Purna:** Of this sort of very quiet sort of backwater.

**S:** I noticed it or felt it more this time. I can't remember really feeling it last time, certainly not on my arrival, in that sort of way. Maybe last time I came I arrived after a long journey and was a bit too tired or too dazed to notice very much. But this time I arrived straight from Sydney rather fresh and bright, and maybe for that reason things struck me more. But that was my impression, very pleasant, if you're tired and weary, and you've had too much of the struggle, it's very nice to come into that sort of atmosphere ...

**Purna:** A bit stupefying.

**S:** But one has the feeling that it's not very easy in that sort of pleasant, idyllic, lotus-eating sort of atmosphere, to arouse, or to get stirred up the energy which is needed to follow the spiritual path. But I think sort of in passing it is quite interesting to see different places, different cultures even, different human environments, in terms of these five or six realms. I mean India is certainly a bit 'hell'-like and a bit 'preta'-like. There's no doubt about that. The West is very 'asura'-like, very competitive, and of course the realm of the gods and the realm of the asuras are sort of connected, they're sometimes

reckoned as one sometimes, sometimes as two, so you get that very much in the West, by which I mean Europe and America, or Western Europe and Northern America. You know, the luxury and enjoyment but the fierce competitiveness at the same time.

Anyway that's the perception of impermanence. So, *"So long as the brethren shall practise the perception of impermanence of the unreality of self - "Anatta"*. Now, what about this? This is one of the, in a sense, vexed topics of Buddhism. There's a lot of discussion, pro and con, about Anatta, and what it really means. But to me it's really quite simple and is directly connected with impermanence. If everything is changing which includes the possibility of growth and development, there is no static self. And to see the truth of impermanence is to see that there is no permanent unchanging self and if there was there would be no real possibility of growth and development, so the one springs out of the other. If you see impermanence, I mean as applied to the human individual, you see also the truth of the unreality of self. But this can be misleading if you speak in terms of the unreality of self. You see what I mean? Have you experienced this, or come up against this?

**Udaya:** People think they don't exist.

**S:** People think they don't exist. Yes.

**Purna:** Or that you've got to deny their existence.

**S:** They've got to deny their existence. Yes. In a sort of psychological way, which sometimes chimes in with their own feelings of self-disparagement and self-depreciation. Unfortunately in some Theravada circles, 'Anatta' is interpreted in this rather negative sort of psychological way. I remember, years and years ago, in England, we had a girl on retreat who was very much drawn to the 'Anatta' doctrine. This is one of the things that drew her into Buddhism she said. She was at Reading University, she was a student and a rather intelligent, not to say intellectual sort of girl, and she came along, first and second year, I think, - she came on retreat as I said, but one day in the course of the retreat, she told me that in the course of the meditation she'd suddenly realised why she was drawn to the 'Anatta' doctrine, the teaching of no self. She said she realised she had been drawn to it because it negated the self, and she hated herself.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Yes.

**S:** So hatred is a form of negation. Negation is a form of hatred. So the 'Anatta' doctrine gave her a sort of philosophical justification for her own self-negation; the negation of herself. So in the case of some people in the West I think we have to be quite careful how we present this. I think it's probably much more helpful, and in a sense truer, to present the Buddha's 'Anatta' teaching in terms of no unchanging self - nothing in you that, well, I won't say cannot change because, yes, it does change all the time, but nothing in you that cannot be improved; nothing in you that cannot grow. So it's the permanent, unchanging self that is negated. It is not your individuality as such, on the phenomenal level.

**Geoff Byng:** Do people do the meditation on the impurities of the body for the same reason?

**S:** Ah, we're going to come onto that in a minute. That's an even better example of the same kind of thing, in a way.

So, yes, everything is impermanent: yes, there is no permanent unchanging self - and yes, the notion of such a self is unreal in the sense that no such self exists. What you have, at least relatively speaking, is a concrete, individual self, so to speak, which is constantly changing, and which,

therefore, can grow and develop. I mean, most people, if you speak in terms of there being no self will feel that this cuts the ground from underneath any possibility of development, and you certainly don't want to give that sort of impression. Has anyone actually come up against this difficulty in classes, or talking to new people?

**Achala:** (unclear)

**S:** Yeah. Or do you tend to sheer away from the teaching of the unreality of the self.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mm.

**S:** Just speak in terms of growth and development.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mm.

**S:** It does seem much more positive, as well as really closer to the spirit of what the Buddha was getting at.

**Purna:** I've only ever found this problem coming up with people that have been into background reading on their own.

**S:** Yes. Yes. And who've read all about the unreality of the self.

**Udaya:** I've certainly found that's the best approach. As we've been saying, that it's not that there's not a self, but it's just not fixed, permanent and unchanging. Of course there is a self.

**S:** Yes.

**Udaya:** ... and that it is inspiring for people to relate to it and understand it.

**S:** Yeah.

**Achala:** And it would still sort of counteracts egotism, and all that is egotistical, if you think it is always changing, (unclear)

**S:** Yes. Right. Right.

**Geoff Byng:** You seem to come up against this problem in connection with rebirth.

**S:** That's true. Yes. But if you've grasped clearly that there isn't any permanent unchanging self really, there is no problem in connection with rebirth, any more than there is a problem in understanding how you can exist from one moment to the next if there is no unchanging self. I think the difficulty arises if you chop things up into discrete, discontinuous bits, then you, have to find a string to connect them all together again, and that string is this alleged permanent unchanging self, but if you don't chop things up in that way, if you see that there is one continuous process going on all the time, there are no bits then, so you don't need a string to connect the bits. You see what I mean?

**End of side one, side two**

So in principle the problem, the pseudo-problem, of how, in the absence of any permanent

unchanging self there can be rebirth, also applies to this life itself. How in the absence of any permanent unchanging self, can you be said to exist from one moment to the next. Well, it's a pseudo-problem. I mean it's like the problem of Achilles and the Tortoise, the famous old proverb. You've come across that? That Achilles cannot overtake the tortoise. For instance - say Achilles has got to run a hundred yards, well, before he can run a hundred yards, he's got to run half that distance - fifty, but before he can run that fifty yards he's got to run half fifty, run twenty-five, OK, but before he can run twenty-five yards, he's got to run half of that, so since space is infinitely divisible he's got to continue covering half of the distance, so in that way, he can't run at all, he can't move through space at all because space is infinitely divisible, but actually he does move through space, so why is that? Well because space is infinitely divisible only mentally, but actually space is continuous and not divided at all. So it is just like that with the permanent unchanging soul or self; if you see change as absolutely continuous and not sort of marked off in stages in reality, because change is literally going on all the time, then you don't need this permanent unchanging self, separate from the process of change, to connect all the bits, the changing bits, together. The change constitutes a sort of continuum, or the changing thing is continuously changing, continually changing. So this is so, whether one looks at the experience of the present life itself, from moment to moment, or the experience, so to speak, of death and rebirth.

**Ian:** You can never tell from them because you never ask them.(unclear) moving on (unclear) .  
(Laughter)

**S:** Mm. Yeah.

**Geoff Byng:** It's quite sort of easy to grasp a doctrine like that with regard to a simple doctrine like the mind, but when you go onto something like say the body - theoretically I mean - you can read about cell replacement and cancers that people get, but it seems a great deal more static.

**S:** Well, it does! This is why the Buddha said that the heresy that identifies the self with the mind was much more foolish than the heresy that identified the self with the body, because the body at least changed relatively slowly, whereas the mind is changing from minute to minute, instant to instant. But still we know that the body does change. I mean, if you are a little observant you see it every day. You comb your hair in the morning, a few hairs fall out, you might see that there's a grey one that wasn't there yesterday, (Laughter) and so on, or you just stand on the scales, you might find you've lost a bit of weight or gained a bit of weight since last week. The body is changing all the time. It may not be very noticeable but you can understand it quite easily as soon as you start reflecting. You see other people changing. And even if you don't notice it now, you'll notice it in forty or fifty years time. (Laughter)

But I think the important thing to realise in this connection, the important thing to see, is just the fact of continuous change, and that change is holding out a great hope. That's to say the possibility of self-transformation.

**Ian:** Presumably the Hindus go so far with their doctrine of Brahman and Atman, it must have taken a great leap of mind for the Buddha to realise that nothing is permanent whatsoever.

**S:** Mm. Mm.

**Ian:** Was there any trace of that doctrine before the Buddha?

**S:** Not so far as I know. No.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Is atman akin to God - for the Hindu?

**S:** Well, it seems that before the Buddha, there wasn't this clear insight into change, and therefore the possibility of human development. It must also be said that the Vedic Hindus seemed to be much more, so to speak, cosmically oriented, they looked out much more. That's the impression one gets looking through the hymns of the Rig Veda, even many of the Upanishads. They didn't pay so much attention to Man, as Buddhism did, and not so preoccupied with Man, psychologically. They were preoccupied, perhaps, more with man and his place in the Cosmos, and in relating man to the cosmos. They weren't so concerned with man as he is in terms of his present level of development, and development beyond that. They were more concerned with linking man up with the Cosmos and perhaps the identification of atman and Brahma was just the culmination of that. They were more interested in seeing man as a part of nature; a part of the totality of existence, and in a sense at one with that, which was rather static - the Buddha's conception was more dynamic. He saw man as going beyond nature, as evolving beyond nature, into a purely transcendental state which he called Nirvana. That's probably putting it in a nutshell. I mean, some of the Upanishads do say, that some wise men looked within and saw there the higher spiritual reality. Yes, there was some indication of that, ah, but there is very little, if anything, about the path to the realisation of any higher spiritual reality, and the dominant emphasis of the Upanishads and certainly of the Vedas, seems to have been on man as a part of nature, a part of the Cosmos, and linking him up with that.

**Purna:** Related to the perception of the unreality of self in a (unclear) way seems to be this whole thing of 'reification' - experiencing oneself as.... treating something that's essentially just a continuity - treating it as a 'thing' in itself - which is what we do with 'self'.

**S:** Mm. Well, in a sense, it's the outcome of a whole sort of practical attitude towards nature. If you want to do things with nature, so to speak; if you want to measure it, you have to sort of see it more statically rather than dynamically, in order to be able to use it and manipulate it.

**Purna:** One has to establish relationships with reality.

**S:** And those relations have to be unchanging; otherwise you cannot calculate, you cannot predict. So it's possible to do that, but this is only possible as the result of a sort of selectivity, in sort of superimposing upon nature a pattern that, in a sense, isn't there, or at least a pattern that doesn't exhaust the total possibilities of nature. (Pause) I mean, this reaches it's climax in modern times, when we're able to do all sorts of things with and to nature, but at the same time we lose contact with nature. We've only a sort of mental, not even to say, mathematical contact with nature; we see nature only in purely quantitative, statistical, mathematical terms. We've ceased to feel nature, so we are alienated from nature, and this is the significance to some extent of the whole ecological movement, which is trying to bring back that sensitivity to nature. Perhaps we need a little bit of the feeling for nature, of man as a part of nature, that the Vedic Hindus had in the days before the Buddha. I mean the Buddha didn't need to emphasise that, that was there all the time. He emphasised other things, but perhaps we need to emphasise that now. In fact many people are trying to emphasise it, or at least to draw attention to it again. So on the psychological side, we've developed much more that aspect of the mind which calculates and manipulates and constructs, and we have tended - that is, in the modern West - to lose, perhaps our sensitivity to nature and our awareness of ourselves as an organic part of nature.

**Geoff Byng:** Bhante, I've got a little psychological digression - um - I've been pondering lately over the question of the brain halves - so that if you have a right-handed person, the work is done by the left brain, and this also is the calculating side which you've just been describing, and many of the Buddhist practices, particularly visualisations and pujas and things seem to be aimed at the half that

is dormant in people.

**S:** Mm.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mm.

**Geoff Byng:** I've been wondering about the implications of that.

**S:** I wouldn't say it's a part that is dormant, but it's certainly a part that is undeveloped. I mean the emotional side is active all the time, but it's usually active in a sort of unskilful way. I mean, sometimes you find that people whose conceptual minds are well developed, and who are conceptually active, are said to be unemotional, but actually one finds this isn't so at all, their emotions are simply undeveloped, not to say infantile, not to say negative and unskilful. I noticed this - and I've mentioned this example several times before - I noticed this in the case of scholars in Buddhism. Their approach was almost entirely intellectual, entirely sort of scholastic, and they claimed that they were keeping their emotions out of their work, but actually their emotions were always powerfully operative, and tended to come out in a very negative way, very often, in their relations with other scholars. I found they were intensely competitive and very, very jealous, and full of resentment, and very argumentative, and controversial, and all the rest of it. So instead of bringing their emotions into their work, and blending their feeling for Buddhism with their understanding of Buddhism, they kept their emotions outside where they just ran riot in a very negative sort of form, which did affect their work also. So you had this sort of alienated intellect 'dealing' with Buddhism, trying to keep the emotions out.

**Ian:** Do you think, Bhante, maybe this is the price you pay for intellectualism? It's very difficult to develop the two, and you have to sort of maybe develop intellectualism a little less to ... to

**S:** I'd rather say that you just need to develop the emotions a little more.

**Ian:** Maybe they don't seem compatible, they really are, but people just don't see them as compatible.

**S:** Mm. Well, they're not compatible in their incompatible forms. (Laughter) They're incompatible because they are unevenly developed, because they're out of balance. So sometimes I say that reading quite a lot of books on Buddhism, one gets the impression that they're written by the alienated intellect. They're not written by the 'whole' man, with integrated intellect and emotion. Occasionally, yes, you get a book on Buddhism of this sort, but usually you get the impression that they've been written by an alienated intellect with the help of a very comprehensive card index and an efficient secretary (Laughter) That's the impression you get.

**Purna:** Blake's Spectre.

**S:** Blake's Spectre, Yes. I think I mentioned sometime ago that I was thinking of writing an article called "Buddhism and the Spectre of Buddhism." The Spectre of Buddhism being the sort of spectral version of Buddhism which is created by this alienated intellect and presented to us as Buddhism; and you get this sort of spectral version of Buddhism in the East as well as in the West; certainly in some Theravada circles. You get a very spectral sort of Buddhism indeed, stalking around without flesh and blood, and pretending to be the real thing and wearing, perhaps, a yellow robe over the bare bones! (Laughter) This is what one gets. One gets it of course most of all in the case of Western scholars, writing about Buddhism without any sort of emotional empathy or emotional participation.

**Ian:** It seems fairly rare to get the combination of the two, and the only two I can bring to mind are

Goethe and Albert Schweitzer.

**S:** Mm.

**Purna:** There's Shantideva.

**Ian:** In the West! In the West!

**Achala:** In Govinda you get a feeling of (unclear)

**S:** You do indeed! I think Govinda is a good example in this respect. You don't get it with Dr Guenther for instance, at all. His emotions erupt from time to time. (Giggle) They break into his writing, into his intellectual formulations, but in a quite disruptive sort of way, using a lot of rude remarks about other professors, at least in a footnote, (Laughter)

**Geoff Byng:** You don't get it with Trevor Ling either.

**S:** Don't get what?

**Geoff Byng:** Um. You also get that intellectual feeling with Trevor Ling.

**S:** Yes. Except that he hasn't even got a very powerful intellect. (Laughter) Well, it's true! Actually in a way, the impoverishment - the emotional impoverishment actually weakens the intellect. Paradoxical as that may sound.

Anyway we are straying a little bit, so let's go on into 'impurity'. *"So long as the brethren shall practise the perception of impermanence of the unreality of self, of impurity."* The perception of impurity, *asubhasamjna*. So what is this perception of impurity? What is impurity here?

\_\_\_\_\_ : A lack of integration?

**S:** No, it isn't that. I think it's important just to go back to the original term, because 'impurity' represents a rather one-sided translation - it's 'asubha' I've dealt with this in 'The Three Jewels'. First of all 'subha', 'subha', is 'pure' and it's also 'beautiful'. So you can translate 'asubha' as 'impure' or also 'the unlovely' or the 'unbeautiful'. This is connected with the way we see things. If you are attached to something, you see it as pleasant and desirable, even as beautiful, but if you are not attached to it you may not see it in that way. Do you get the idea? So very often you see as pleasant and desirable, or as beautiful, something which is not really very good for us, but we see it as pleasant and even beautiful, just because of our desire. So this is the 'subhasamjna'. The 'asubhasamjna', the perception of the impure or the unlovely, as seeing as impure and unlovely, or seeing as really unattractive, those things which are not really good for us. So we have to sort of reverse the usual way in which we see things. So this is especially applied in Buddhism to the relations between the sexes, and this is why one is asked as a sort of extreme antidote for one's extreme craving, say, for physical bodies of the opposite sex, to reflect on what those bodies, in a sense, are really like, or will be like in a few years' time. You can - here the so-called 'corpse' meditation comes in, this is the sort of specific form of the practice. So you start off with the body the sort of body that maybe you're usually quite attracted to, but you think well, when it's dead what's it going to be like. And you sort of just go through the ten stages, ending up - I won't go through all the stages - you end up with just a handful of dust that blows in all directions, and you think, "Well, is this really what I'm drawn to? Is this really what I'm attracted to? And it gives you sort of food for thought.

So normally, if for instance you are in a mood of intense desire, intense sexual desire, you'll see almost any person of the opposite sex as attractive and as beautiful. (Low murmurs) But once the desire has passed you sort of take a second look and, well "How could I ever fall for that," you think. That is your reaction. So you see something as beautiful and pure in terms of your own subjective desire, or because of your own subjective desire, so to check that desire, and curb that desire, or at least limit it, you try to cultivate this other way of seeing those objects that you usually see as pure and beautiful; you try to see them as impure and unbeautiful, especially by the way of the ten 'corpse' meditations.

But again, here, one can put it in a different way, perhaps more positively, though one doesn't want to make any real concessions (Laughter) and one can speak of a higher, more spiritual beauty, as it were, - the beauty of the forms encountered in meditation, when you visualise, well, you see then, forms, figures, more beautiful than anything you can see on earth, and you can lead your interest and your desire, so to speak, in that direction. Or you can try to refine your desire through the enjoyment of the fine arts. That's another way of doing it. This is the perception of impurity, this is what it sort of, technically, means.

So how do you feel about this in relation to the newcomer to Buddhism? How do you think that you can't bring out your contemplation of the ten stages of decomposition of a corpse straightaway, that might come next week, but not this week? So how would you put this if someone was to ask you about it? What is this 'asubha bhavana' all about?

**Achala:** Through the idea of relativity and, ah...

**S:** Um, yeah. That there are sort of degrees of beauty, and that these are very often linked up with one's own state of mind and the more refined your state of mind, the more refined the objects which you find beautiful. Do you see what I mean? Or the more refined the objects which you find beautiful, and to which you are attracted. I mean, you can see this in your ordinary life, if you are in a rather crude state of mind, well, you can be attracted to almost any member of the opposite sex, but as you get a bit more refined, you get a bit more 'choosy', you tend to place more importance on certain features, or certain expressions, and then, perhaps, you think in terms of somebody's nature or temperament, or intellectual characteristics without paying too much attention to the physical side of things, and then maybe, you start thinking of purely ideal qualities, existing on say, the meditative level, not necessarily associated with any living human being, and you're more and more drawn to those; in that way, your desires become more and more refined and drawn more and more upwards, you see what I mean? So perhaps one could present the possibility of this sort of relativity, this sort of gradual ascent, to the comparatively new person. Perhaps putting it in cultural terms to begin with. When you are young and crude and vigorous you like rock-and-roll maybe, but as you get more emotionally refined, perhaps you start liking Mozart or Beethoven, whom you didn't like before. One mustn't perhaps look at it in a moralistic sort of way - this question of 'asubha' bhavana' - it's more like refining your appreciation of the arts, so to speak.

**Purna:** Is that what it's about in Plato's Symposium?

**S:** Yeah. Right.

**Purna:** Progressive refinement from physical love through to 'Sophia', love of wisdom.

**S:** Yes. Right. But it must be a genuine thing not a purely mental thing, because some people can sort of go through the stages mentally, but in all practical senses they're just where they always were. And again it mustn't lead to a cynical depreciation of beauty. I mean, the Buddha was once misrepresented

as teaching that when you reach a certain stage of spiritual development you see the whole world as ugly. But the Buddha said, "No, I didn't teach any such thing. I said that when you reach that stage of development, then you know what beauty really is." So there is a subtle difference. You know this is illustrated by the story of Nanda isn't it? whom the Buddha took up into the Heaven of the Thirty-three and showed him the heavenly nymphs after which he didn't care for earthly ladies at all. They looked like monkeys with their tails burnt off, he said.

**Purna:** A baboon.

**S:** Well, maybe, it isn't quite as dramatic as that, but you do see things in a different way, you see subtler beauties and you're more drawn to those.

**Geoff Byng:** (unclear) meet people every so often who have this natural inclination to look on the world as ugly, so they nip off to the forest and do tons of 'impurity' meditations and then walk around like skeletons, with big staring eyes horribly, and the minute they looked at you, you can see them thinking - "Bones, bones, bones".

**S:** Well, it is one side of the picture, but what you mustn't think is seeing as bones is seeing the truth, and seeing flesh and blood and bones is not seeing the truth. You see what I mean? There were some pictures in a little book I was given on Buddhism in the course of my tour. For instance there's an X-ray picture of a human being, and then there's an ordinary photograph, and then there's another kind of picture - you probably know about this - which comes out in different colour patches, green and red - what is this?

**Achala:** That would be, thermal.

**S:** Yes. Thermal photography. So all of these give you a picture of the same, inverted commas, human being or human body. Now which is the true one? You can't say that one is true and the others are false. They are all, in a way, on the same level. But what they tell you is that there are different ways of looking at the same thing, so to speak, and you shouldn't identify any one way of looking at things, including your own as the way and the only true way. So when you see people in terms of skeletons, or just see the skeletons walking about instead of flesh and blood human beings, that's alright. That is only to show you that when you see a flesh and blood human being walking about that's only seeing things from one particular point of view. So your seeing them as skeletons in another way, helps to correct that one-sidedness, but if you say, well, when you see them walking about as flesh and blood human beings that's a false perception, but when you see them walking about as skeletons, that's a true perception, you've only changed one - the absolutisation of one relative and limited point of view - for the absolutisation of another relative and limited point of view, instead of using the one to help you appreciate the relativity of the other. Lama Govinda goes into this in a little story which was originally published in 'Stepping Stones' way back in the early 50s. I don't know if anyone has ever seen that. I forget the details, but it's called, "Go Deeper", and Lama Govinda, the author, is walking along the road and he meets a Theravada bhikkhu - the story goes something like this - I've not read it for more than twenty years - and a beautiful girl also passes by, so you can guess the sort of thing, the monk says, "Oh! a bag of bones! Bag of bones"! So he's asked, "Well, why do you say, 'Bag of bones', Well, there's a beautiful young girl passing by." So the monk says, "Look deeper! Look deeper! It's only a bag of bones." Well, then the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara comes by and he says to the monk, "Look deeper, look deeper. Look deeper than the bag of bones. See the living, suffering, developing human being." So that's Lama Govinda's story. So look deeper, indeed, but make sure that you are looking deeper, and not just seeing things from a different point of view, which is equally valid with the first.

**Geoff Byng:** Lama Govinda was replying to the Theravadin equivalent of that story in which the Bodhisattva doesn't appear. [Pause]

**S:** So I think I've gone into this a bit in "The Three Jewels", that when you try to see things as, let's say, displeasing that usually you find pleasing, you're not asserting metaphysically, that in ultimate truth and reality they are displeasing rather than pleasing, you are cultivating the looking at another side of the matter in order to counteract your naturally, or normally, one-sided attitude. And ideally not just to develop a different point of view, though that is valid and useful, but also a higher, and more developed, and more further-on point of view. I mean, a skeleton, as such, is not more 'real' than flesh and blood. But it's useful sometimes to remind oneself that there is a skeleton there behind the flesh and blood. That gives you a more balanced picture. (Pause)

Alright - 'of the besetting dangers', ; "*the perception of the besetting dangers*". What are these 'besetting dangers'? (Pause) Well, this is an aspect of spiritual life to which, it seems, the Buddha often drew the attention of these monks. It's seeing the world, and especially seeing certain mental states within oneself, unskilled mental states, as dangerous. And seeing, as it were, cause for fear in those mental states. So what sort of mental states do you think the Buddha would have had in mind?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Sloth. Anger.

**S:** Um. Yeah. But why should they be seen as dangerous?

**Ian:** They could be taken as reality.

**S:** No. I think actually it's all on a much more practical commonsense level. Why are sloth and torpor dangerous? Why is craving dangerous? Why is neurotic attachment dangerous?

\_\_\_\_\_ : They interfere with development.

**S:** They interfere with development. Putting it even more bluntly and crudely in the original Buddhist terms.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Make you unhappy ...

**S:** Make you unhappy. They lead to suffering. So the 'besetting dangers' are those situations, those unskilled mental states, which will lead you, sooner or later, maybe quite soon, to suffering, so you should see them as dangerous. So this is quite a thought, in a way. If you go to a party, it's dangerous! Don't say for instance - I'm sorry to keep knocking the poor old party - (Laughter) but it's a good, useful illustration and may have been on my mind a little bit recently, while I was in England. Don't see the party as attractive and pleasant, and all that sort of thing, it's dangerous. If someone invites you to a party, you're being invited to a situation of danger (Giggle) at least of potential danger because in that situation, unskilful mental states are very likely to arise, in fact almost certain to arise, it's a dangerous situation. The world itself is a place of danger. To go out into the street is dangerous, not because you might be knocked down by a car, but because you might see an advertisement for this, that, or the other, and it will start stimulating your greed, it's dangerous!

**Purna:** In terms of an analogy you gave once. It's almost as if your turban's on fire and anything that makes you think that it's not on fire is dangerous.

**S:** You might sort of develop it and say that, yes, you have a turban - it's a highly inflammable turban - the least little spark will set it alight and you're going out thoughtlessly into places where sparks are

flying about all the time. But such places are dangerous. So this is not an aspect of spiritual life very often emphasised nowadays, but it is quite prominent in the Pali texts. So perhaps one need not necessarily think in terms of 'dangerous' in the sense of leading directly to suffering, but certainly dangerous in the sense of impeding, or obstructing, or even undoing, your spiritual development. Going to the movies is dangerous; talking with your friends, I mean your old friends, is dangerous! Roaming through the streets of the big city at night is dangerous, not because you might be mugged, but because you might be tempted, with all the bright signs, and all that kind of thing. The world is dangerous, because it's full of 'maras'. Don't start getting a persecution complex or anything like that, but you can see the point of what the Buddha is saying, that there are so many occasions of unskilful mental activity. So those situations in which these occasions arise, are dangerous. But primary of course, is the unskilled mental state itself which is dangerous.

**Geoff:** I get a reaction against particular aspects because of the - like the Christian, Puritan sort of thing, saying, "Movies are dangerous, looking at a beautiful woman is dangerous".

**S:** No, the Christian Puritan attitudes say "it's wicked". Buddhism says, "It's dangerous". That's quite different.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mm.

**S:** If someone says, "Be careful when you go out into the street, you might get knocked down by a car, I mean, this is not Puritanism, this is common sense. So if the Buddha says, unskilled mental states are dangerous because they lead to suffering, this is not Puritanism, it's common sense. So there is a difference, even though it might sound or look a bit the same.

**Purna:** I was just thinking of another analogy in terms of we're almost, whether we like it or not, doomed to carry this container of petrol round inside us, and there're two aspects to work on, one to prevent sparks setting it off before we've dealt with it, and the other one is actually to get rid of that petrol.

**S:** Um. Um. Yeah. (Laughter)

\_\_\_\_\_ : (unclear) [Laughter]

**S:** But this perception of danger, or fear, is an antidote to the happy-go-lucky, rather careless, attitude towards spiritual life and spiritual development. Do you see what I mean? A rather maybe unmindful attitude towards it. A not very serious attitude, light-hearted attitude towards it. It's a form of realisation that whatever you do does have consequences; that one must realise this. You can't get away with it. If you do something foolish it will make a difference in your life. You can't just write it off. It won't just end there. It will have consequences. So you must be careful. It's alright to be light-hearted, but only when you are light-hearted on a basis of habitually skilful mental states, otherwise your lightheartedness can lead you astray; you may just take the spiritual life itself very lightly. Take unskilled mental states themselves very lightly, or that they don't matter - 'just this once - what difference does it make?' It can make a lot of difference.

**Geoff Byng:** I still feel it's very often a lot of interesting things are gradually disappearing out the door!

**S:** Well, that's one way of looking at it, but even more interesting things are appearing on the horizon at the same time.

**Udaya:** I think very often we sort of, well, I think most of the time, actually, virtually all the time - we're really out of touch with the precariousness of our situation.

**S:** Ah! Yes! Yes.

**Udaya:** ... and how it really is a struggle if we are really going to make any progress at all ...

**S:** I was thinking the other day, in a sense, in England, or in the case of the Movement generally, so far we've had it very easy. We don't realise how lucky we've been. We've had no real opposition. We've had no real difficulties. We've had no real problems or hassles, things have been very smooth and easy. It wouldn't have been like that in some countries. Think even of India where fifteen hundred Buddhists in villages had their homes burned down a few months ago, many of them were killed, many of the women were raped. Why? Because they were Buddhists, and because Buddhists are becoming a little more prosperous now. Caste Hindus resented it. We don't have anything like that to cope with. But supposing we tried to start up in a Moslem country. They would have given us very short shrift indeed. Probably would have had our heads cut off, or something like that, or at the very least, have been confined to prison. But we've had it very, very easy. The odd difficulty, yes, the odd difficulty. Nothing really to mention. Nothing like persecution. We might have the odd difficulty with the local authority over planning permission for this, that, or the other, but what is that? That's nothing at all. So we don't realise that things could change; could be a change of government, could be a change of policy. Even at present we see a bit of reaction here and there, and certain people stickling in their attitudes. A recent instance has been this blasphemy case, and apparently there's going to be a bit of tightening up in England. But of course that's being disputed and fought. But we don't realise how precarious the whole situation is and that the way that we've had it so far, so easy, so pleasant, so happy, for everybody, may not continue. There might be big political changes in the world. We might find ourselves living under very different conditions.

**Geoff Byng:** I think that there's a slight level of awareness that we are actually a member of a minority group.

**S:** Well, in the first place we're not a group. So the question of minority group doesn't arise really. One certainly doesn't feel this in England. But if one was living under a more difficult sort of regime, one might feel that. People in India certainly feel it. Buddhists feel that they are one of the minorities and that they have to band together with other minorities like the Christians and even the Moslems, - band together with them against the Hindu majority. They feel that. But certainly in England we don't feel that. But that means you are feeling yourself, or experiencing yourself, as a group, and of course you are being looked at as a group by others. In India, of course, the Hindus regard the Buddhists, as a group, as a minority group, they don't see them as a spiritual community, well, they aren't really a spiritual community. The very idea of that has only developed just recently. But in England a spiritual community can exist as a spiritual community, but if the authorities started treating you as a group it would be very difficult not to feel, at least peripherally that you were a group, and that would make it more difficult for you, more difficult for you generally. It would be very difficult to have an FWBO in any communist country. So think of the countries where we couldn't function. We probably couldn't function in any of the Islamic states, with the possible exceptions of Indonesia and Malaysia. We certainly couldn't function in the communist states. Might get by with the odd yoga class, but not much more than that.

**End of tape four, tape five**

So life is precarious. There's no real 'deva loka' actually. It might seem like that for the time being. In England, people have got used to not being invaded. England wasn't invaded during the war. France

was invaded, Holland was invaded, Denmark was invaded, Norway was invaded, Greece was invaded, Italy was partly occupied by Germans, but Britain wasn't and people are a bit complacent there. Think it could never happen, but it could happen.

**Geoff Byng:** It's very much the case here, where the (unclear) of the population has never experienced a war (unclear)

**S:** Well, there were the Maori wars of a hundred years ago but they were quite early affairs, primitive affairs, so to speak.

**Geoff Byng:** There was no rationing or anything like that, or losing a vast sector of your population.

**S:** So one must realise that all human life is precarious. We are enjoying, politically speaking, a relatively favourable state of affairs at the moment, despite the wars and rumours of wars here and there, and though life is very difficult for many people in many parts of the world, but on the whole we are not too badly off. So we must make the most of the opportunity. Don't sort of assume it is going stay like that indefinitely. By the end of the century one could see all sorts of very big changes, catastrophic changes. This is quite possible! So to realise these things is just a form of the perception of besetting dangers, these dangers are there all the time. Dangers to our own life; dangers to the way in which we live; dangers economically and politically.

**Ian:** It's perception of impermanence on a more gross level.

**S:** Yes! Right! Yeah. So if you have the opportunity to hear, study and practise the Dharma now, well by all means take advantage of it. You'd be foolish if you didn't! Who knows, there could be a war, younger people could be called up, or even if they decided to be 'conscientious objectors' life could be made very difficult for them. It wouldn't be so easy to practise the Dharma under these sort of conditions. Supposing there was a change of government, supposing organisations like Buddhist groups were banned, what would you do then? You'd have to go 'underground'. This is not inconceivable in certain countries where the FWBO now flourishes. It is not inconceivable within the next, say, fifteen, twenty, thirty years, some of you could live to see some such development, somewhere or other you know. You might hear one day, in twenty or thirty years' time that the FWBO had been banned in certain countries and Order Members had had to go underground, or Order Members had been thrown into prison. This is not impossible! I mean, so far we've had it so easy, but it may not stay that way. Let's hope it does, in a way; but it may not; it's unlikely to, in the long run, in the very long run. So far most people don't realise there's an FWBO around, but later on they are going to realise, and some of them are not going to like what we are doing. At the moment we're too small and too insignificant to notice. In England, we're just beginning to be noticed; or to allow ourselves to be noticed, and that may mean quite a bit of opposition in one way or another, when people start realising what we're really up to. (Laughter) When we say we want a New Society, we really mean it, for instance. This isn't the sort of customary political talk. When one is speaking in terms of changing the individual, well, we really do mean it.

**Ian:** Could be that you had a change of government in the next general election. Things might get tougher.

**S:** Well, In England, well I don't know, there might be a change of government in five or six weeks' time.

**Ian:** Yeah. That's what I mean.

**S:** This means Mrs Thatcher. I don't think she'll do any great harm. I was thinking further ahead than that. But the present mood in some circles in England is quite 'reactionary'. Using that rather well-worn political term. There is a sort of back-lash coming from orthodox, fundamentalist Christians for instance.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Young Christians?

**S:** Yes it includes young ones. This is one of the more disturbing features, it includes a lot of young people. A lot of young people are going into fundamentalist Christianity. It's not just fuddy-duddies by any means!

\_\_\_\_\_ : No.

**Purna:** Particularly with young people.

**Achala:** But they, a lot of the young ones, think it more sort of broadminded or tolerant?

\_\_\_\_\_ : No, not the Pentacostals and the ones into the talking in tongues ...

\_\_\_\_\_ : C.O.G.

**Purna:** Children of God. Some of them are very fundamentalist and very intolerant of Buddhism.

**S:** This is a measure of their insecurity. I mean, a lot of young people feel very insecure, so they're all the more susceptible to the appeal of these various fundamentalist, very dogmatic sort of Christian movements. They want certainty. They feel insecure; they experience the danger. In a sense, on a certain level, they do perceive these besetting dangers, but they try to cling to something which isn't a secure support. They try to cling to something outside themselves, which seems to have a certain strength and validity. I think that's the great danger. I mean, you notice that if you just experience, or just see, the impermanence of things without any positive emotional development, you can be just cynical, and reactive and so on. So here also, it is possible to perceive some of these besetting dangers, but just try to evade them, or escape from them in the wrong sort of way; and it seems that this is what these sort of people do.

**Geoff Byng:** It is very disturbing though, if a couple of people come to the door who actually do see, in the literal sense, see demons. They're looking around for your tail.

**S:** Well, I had this experience. some years ago, when I was at the Hampstead Vihara: a young man who had been attending my lectures came to see me, and he brought along his girlfriend and she happened to be Irish - an Irish Catholic, straight from the bogs of Ireland - (Laughter) Of course she was living with him 'in sin' but that's another story - but, ah, that's forgivable - but he stayed with her for a couple of hours and we were talking - she was just listening in mounting horror, and she was evidently very, very uncomfortable, and he told me afterwards, when we just happened to meet on our own, that she had told him when they got back to their flat, that she had literally seen me as the Devil incarnate! Yes! Well, she was a good Irish Catholic girl. So that is quite a strange sort of experience, especially when you are actually confronted by somebody who sees you in this sort of way. So it could be that, one day, a member of the Western Buddhist Order is surrounded by people who regard him or her with horror and astonishment and contempt and loathing. It's quite possible! How are you going to stand up against that? Are you going to still feel a real individual, and a real Buddhist? Are you still going to 'Go for Refuge'? Will you be able to keep it up? That's what you have to ask yourself. That's why I think we have it so easy at present! So easy! I mean, we don't

realise how easy! Compared with people in some parts of the world. Well, some Buddhists even now, the Buddhists in India especially, Lokamitra and I were talking about this - nearly all our Mitras in Pune are all with two exceptions, elderly men. They are men in their fifties and sixties, one or two in their forties, and those who are not retired - there are one or two retired people there, theirs is a different case - but all those who are not retired have to work all day and every day except Sunday. They don't get off - they don't come back from work until about eight o'clock, and then they have to come along to the mitra study meeting, or something of that sort, at that time; and they've got large families to support. They've got seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve children. They've got a tiny little house, not to say hut, with maybe two rooms, in which they all live. There's no corner to sit and meditate. So how difficult it is for them! But they are enthusiastic Mitras, really into Buddhism and into 'the Friends'.

But in England, in New Zealand, there probably isn't a single mitra, who can't find a quiet corner to sit in and meditate if they really want to. They've got books. These people can't afford books. They can't afford to go on retreat. We subsidise retreats in India! They're subsidised from England. Lokamitra was telling me the cost per head to go on retreat was seven-and-a-half rupees, or something like that, for a weekend retreat. Seven-and-a-half rupees?

**Purna:** Half a New Zealand dollar.

**S:** ... and the majority of them cannot afford it. They can't afford it. So they're subsidised out of the general fund. Lokamitra says they absolutely must go on that retreat. It will do them good. But they haven't got even seven-and-a-half rupees, which is just the bare cost per head. There's no question of there being a profit margin on those retreats (Chuckle) They're subsidised. But this is the condition of people's lives. They can't find seven-and-a-half rupees, for the weekend retreat. It's as much as they can do to find the bus fare to get to the place where we're having it. We can't have it very far away because people wouldn't be able to afford the journey there; but a short bus ride, yes, they can just about manage that. Sometimes they have to borrow the money for that. As for having tape recorders, and well-stocked libraries, there's no question of that. It's as much as they can do to buy (unclear) in some cases. Though things are improving (unclear). And also if you've got large families, especially in India, children are always falling ill, having to be taken to hospital. If you take them to hospital you may have to wait two or three days camping on the verandah of the hospital, before you can see a doctor. So if someone disappears for a few days, you wonder what has happened. He hasn't come to the class. He turns up and says, "Well, my third son was not very well, I had to take him to hospital and stay there for a few days before we could see the doctor. It's not easy. These are the conditions under which these people are trying to practise Buddhism, and be good Buddhists, and evolve and grow. And there are tens of thousands like that. And in the villages the situation is much worse. At least in some of the cities, now especially in Pune, well, Buddhism is available, if you only can get along to it. In the villages it isn't even available, even when they want it.

Anyway, maybe we should stop there and leave the besetting dangers for a moment and have a cup of tea.

**BREAK**

*(part of sentence missing)*

**S:**..... practise the perception of impermanence of the unreality of self, of impurity, of the besetting dangers, of abandonment. This isn't really, a very good translation. I'm assuming - I haven't got a copy of the text unfortunately, but as far as I recollect it's used to translate, 'nibbada'. Yes. 'Nibbada', which occurs in the list of the positive Nidanās also. It's more like 'withdrawal', or a sort of ... I'd

rather like to sort of paraphrase it as "disentanglement". I think this is what it really implies. The perception of 'disentanglement', that is to say the perception of the need just to disentangle yourself. I mean, having perceived the besetting dangers, well, the logical consequence would seem to be that you withdraw. You extricate yourself; you disentangle yourself from these sort of situations and mental states.

**Udaya:** I quite like that 'disentanglement' because it's not suggesting, like 'abandonment'; or other things like 'becoming detached'. It sort of tends to suggest that there's a sort of healthy established norm that you're separating yourself off from, whereas 'disentanglement' tends to suggest.....

**S:** It suggests some sort of mess.

Udaya: ... and that you're disentangling yourself from that mess for something better.

**S:** Umm. Yes. Mm. Right.

**Udaya:** ... that puts it in a more positive way.

**S:** Yes. To 'disentangle' also suggests a sort of straightening out. Suggests a certain clarity and freedom from confusion.

**Geoff Byng:** There's also that lovely story about the man who caught a (unclear)

**S:** Mm. Yeah. But of course in this connection there is usually dragged across the path, the old red herring of escapism. Do you get that sort of question from people very much; or that sort of objection? It must be the way that we now present it to them.

\_\_\_\_\_ : It might have gone out of fashion.

**S:** I think it is partly the way we present Buddhism. It can only arise if you attach absolute value to the existing state of things. But, in any case, I think in the FWBO now, I think we present Buddhism in terms of development, and therefore very positively, so the question of escapism can hardly arise, really.

**Udaya:** I remember it came up in one class, and it was quite good, because I think it must have been the week before, or something, they had been listening to what must have been seminar extracts where you give your three types of escapism.

**S:** Ah!

**Udaya:** And you sort of reeled them off and it went down quite well. It was very succinct, you can't argue with it.

**S:** Umm.

**Udaya:** That's a handy one to have up your sleeve.

**Purna:** What was that?

**S:** I don't remember, to be honest.

**Udaya:** You were saying that there are types of escapism. One, basically, you are in gaol; you are in prison, you are in the conditioned world; and the first type of escapism is ignoring that fact, um, that you're not actually in prison, you're just not facing up to it, the second type of escapism is being caught up in the means, all the different methods of escaping but never actually escaping ...

**S:** Ah!

**Purna:** Reading books about the ...

**Udaya:** Yeah. All the different paths and methods and where they will go and the theory of them, but you're still not escaping. And the third type of escapism is actually escaping, getting out of prison, of confinement (unclear). In Buddhist terms, realising Nirvana, becoming enlightened, and that is Buddhism.

**S:** The first is just sort of pretending that you're not in prison. Pretending in fact that you are free, and just watching your TV set in your prison cell, and kidding yourself that you are not in prison. That is the real escapism!

**Udaya:** Do you remember when you were in New Zealand last time there was a sort of 'Come Alive' campaign? "Don't just sit there, do something". I remember you said then, "Come alive, don't do something, just sit". (Laughter)

**S:** What happened to that campaign?

**Udaya:** I don't know. It didn't come alive.

**S:** It died an unnatural death.

**Udaya:** That was very much a sort of escapist thing, I think. "Go yachting, get into this, get into that", anything but realise that you're life's hollow.

**S:** Umm.

**Geoff:** Something the same - I'm not quite sure if it was you or not - but some of the people who are actually most consumed with escape (unclear) gaolers are the people who are the most concerned with that problem.

**S:** I didn't say that. It's quite a good point. Yeah. Mm. It's the people who want to keep you confined.

**Purna:** The columns of 'the establishment'.

**S:** Mm. Mm. Yeah.

**Udaya:** You know, you never really get that sort of query from somebody who is really eager to learn about Buddhism, who comes along to the centre - there's always this sort of scathing sceptic who's there to sort of tell you rather than to learn.

**S:** Actually when people perhaps charge you with escapism, what they are really afraid of is that you may actually be escaping, and they want you to deny that actually you are escaping, or trying to escape and that actually you are quite satisfied with things as they are, and have no intention of trying to get away, or to get out. Then they would feel reassured.

**Udaya:** Maybe we should say, yes, maybe. (Laughter)

**S:** We're digging our tunnel. (Pause) Well, sometimes when they accuse you of escapism, what they are really saying is well, you can't really get out, why pretend that you can, just accept the fact that you can't get out, just make the best of it. Sometimes they seem to be saying that sort of thing.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Maybe because they see no way out themselves.

**S:** Mm. Mm. I mean, they resent that you even suggest that there could be a way out.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Yeah. Yeah. That you could be happier.

**S:** Mm. Mm. But the crux of the matter is that you accept things as they are, as they accept them.

**Geoff:** It really is amazing how people come along radiating an air of depression (Laughter) Something like that - and then just, you know? - I can't put it into words ...

**S:** Mm. (Pause)

Alright then, from "abandonment" to "passionlessness". *"So long as the brethren shall practise the perception of impermanence of the unreality of self, of impurity, of the besetting dangers, of abandonment, of passionlessness"* - the language is apparently quite negative, isn't it? It's 'viraga' but 'raga' suggests passion in a rather unpleasant sort of sense. It's a hot, uncomfortable sort of passion. So when you're free from it you become sort of delightfully cool and serene and calm. That's the sort of suggestion. Not sort of being lifeless and dull and dead. Usually, in English, we don't think of 'passionlessness' as a very desirable sort of state, but 'viraga' certainly is.

**Udaya:** Like being free from a fever.

**S:** Like being free from a fever. Mm. Yes. It's that delightful state when you feel that you are on the road to recovery, you're actually getting better. You feel better. The fever has gone and you feel very fresh and buoyant and rested and healthy again. So the 'passionlessness' is more like that. And again, perhaps, it isn't the sort of aspect that you'd emphasise to the new person, the newcomer.

**Udaya:** Yes. Some of these things that sort of probably need at least several months, maybe longer, of introspection, maybe just through meditation practice, a few retreats, and sort of coming up against a few difficulties, a few problems, before people realise, in a sense, how tainted their consciousness is.

**S:** Umm. (Pause) And then of course on from "passionlessness" to "cessation" - 'nirodha', which in a way is the most negative term of all, at least grammatically - "Cessation" "nirodha" - the complete cessation of all unskilful mental states. Is that the whole story? It isn't the whole story, because there is the fullest possible development of all skilful, in fact, in a way, super-skilful, mental states. It's the continual procession of those skilful mental states without there being any recession from them, which in a way, constitutes the enlightened mind, the enlightened consciousness. Not that when you are enlightened there are no mental states at all, but that there's a continual sequence of mental states which are irreversibly positive. You become completely creative. So yes, "nirodha" is an aspect of enlightenment, but as I've said somewhere, it's not the last word on the subject, or not the only word at least. But it is a very important word. But there is a cessation of unskilful mental states, they do not recur, and they never recur again. So perhaps the early Buddhists, perhaps even the Buddha

himself, was so much sort of impressed by the, well, the ineffability of these higher spiritual states that he hesitated to say very much about them - just spoke in terms of the cessation of the unskilful states rather than try to say very much about these highly skilful states, in fact spontaneous states, that supervene upon the cessation of the unskilful states. Though at the same time the skilful states would have been growing and developing all the way through the spiritual life and the following of the spiritual path. But it does seem as though early Buddhism, and perhaps the Buddha himself, was a little reticent about saying anything about the state of enlightenment. The later Buddhists seem to have filled in the gaps rather happily, but perhaps a bit too freely at times. Not that the Buddha said nothing about Nirvana, as is sometimes asserted, but he said very much more about 'the path' than about Nirvana, and perhaps that is significant.

So long as you go on experiencing 'the Path', higher and higher stages of 'the Path', you need not really bother very much about Nirvana. Because that will only mean you are thinking of a sort of fixed goal 'out there' to be reached or to be realised. Whereas in fact, it seems to be much more like the continual flow of ever more and more positive and creative, irreversible, skilful states. (Pause) Do people ask very much about Nirvana? People who come to classes? Or what enlightenment really is? Does it seem not to occur to them? These sort of questions?

**Udaya:** I don't know whether they ask so much about what Nirvana is, but they often ask about enlightenment, or the Ultimate, or Truth. Sometimes it's very difficult.

**Purna:** I think it's when you're approaching things in terms of growth and development, it's less relevant.

**S:** Mm. Yes! Mm. Because if you don't approach it in terms of growth and development there seems to be more of a gap between "here" and "there". So what is on the other side, so to speak. But if you stress growth and development on the Path, that seems to fill up the gap and you feel more satisfied, more happy.

**Purna:** I think the danger there, is that people are going to interpret it mainly psychologically.

**S:** Mm. Yeah. Mm. Especially those who have had contact with the 'growth' movement, or with 'encounter' groups, or psychotherapeutic groups.

**Purna:** They (unclear) with the transcendental.

**S:** Yes.

**Udaya:** Well, I think the way you can introduce it - or the way I usually introduce it to people - is speaking in terms of growth, change and development, but leading on to the point, where I start talking about subject and object, and overcoming subject and object, and in that way approaching what Nirvana might be.

**S:** Yes. Well, one can say "the transcendental", to use that term, also means or implies absolutely radical change. Change which is so great, so extreme, it seems like a complete discontinuity from your present state, or even any transformation of your present state, or higher development of your present state that you can possibly imagine. And this is especially where this whole question of subject and object comes in, because you cannot but think in those sort of terms. So therefore to you, an experience which does not take place within the framework of the subject-object dichotomy is transcendental, because it goes completely beyond, not only your present experience, but even any conceivable extension of your present experience so far as you, at present, are concerned. You can't

really imagine that sort of state, therefore that's the transcendental. That's what transcends what you can imagine, even when you think of yourself as inconceivably transformed. There's still something you can't imagine beyond, and a further transformation, an even more radical one, and that's the transcendental. It's not a thing out there, it's not a sort of object.

\_\_\_\_\_ : That story about the well frog and the ocean frog is....

**S:** I mean, it is simply a term given to the whole process of transformation carried beyond the point of conceivability. You can sort of theoretically imagine that process being prolonged, so to speak, beyond the point of inconceivability, but you can't really understand it, and that is what you call 'the transcendental'. (Pause) It sort of represents your faith that the process of transformation doesn't ever actually come to a full stop in the literal sense. It doesn't stop where you can no longer imagine it as continuing.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Sometimes it's hard to convince people, or even try to explain it, even try to explain that to people.

**S:** Mm. You find it with small children, you know. If small children ask you, well, "What's it like to go out to work every day, Daddy?" You find it very difficult to explain. Or the classic one, when small children ask what married life is really like, and why people get married and go off together. What can you say? How can you explain it to the child? It's not possible. He has to grow up and experience it for himself.

\_\_\_\_\_ : (unclear)

\_\_\_\_\_ : (unclear)

**S:** Even enlightenment.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mm. Yeah.

**Geoff:** Auckland community has even got a 'Nirvana Rest Home' just along the road.

**Purna:** There's a 'Nirvana Motel'.....

\_\_\_\_\_ : (unclear)

**S:** Anyway that's the sequence. So the Buddha says in this section, "*Seven other conditions, brethren, will I teach you, that prevent decay, - so long as the brethren shall practise the perception of impermanence of the unreality of self, of impurity, of the besetting dangers, of abandonment, of passionlessness, of cessation, just so long may their prosperity be looked for, not their decay.*" So really, here, what is the Buddha concerned with? All these particular conditions are of the same nature, they all represent different aspects of what?

**Purna:** 'Vipassana'

**S:** 'Vipassana'. Insight. So what the Buddha is saying we can sort of really connect this particular group of conditions, with the general context, i.e. of the stability of the Order, what the Buddha is really saying here is that some experience of the transcendental on the part of at least some members of the spiritual community is essential to the stability of that spiritual community. You see what I mean?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mm.

**S:** You could say that there are two kinds of stability of the spiritual community, corresponding in a way to two kinds of stability within the spiritual life of the individual. Supposing you are not a stream-entrant, you can maintain yourself, nonetheless, indefinitely, in higher states of consciousness, say dhyana states even, just by continuing to be very, very careful, and, so to speak, not taking any chances. You can maintain yourself on these higher levels of consciousness. But you could slip back if you ever ceased to be careful, but nonetheless, so long as you did not slip back; so long as you continued to be careful, you would be a spiritual person; you would be an individual. Maybe with a small "i". But you become an individual, only in the full sense, with a capital "I", when due to insight, due to the development of insight, there's no longer any danger of your slipping back. You see what I mean? So it's like that within the spiritual community. You could have a spiritual community which was genuinely a spiritual community just because everybody in it was very careful, kept up their practices, etc., etc., but they could slip back, it could cease to be a spiritual community, and it could just become a group. You might get a situation in which there are just a few people carrying on with their practice, and keeping the others up to scratch, but there's the possibility that in the end those few will feel the dead weight of the many and that they will slip back too, and then there would be no spiritual community because no spiritual individual, even in the relative sense.

But supposing that within the spiritual community there were some who had developed insight, they could never slip back, so within the spiritual community you would have in fact, a nucleus of people, who in fact were members of the Arya-Sangha, so others might slip back, but they would not slip back, so as long as you've got that nucleus within the spiritual community, you've got the permanent possibility of rehabilitation of the entire spiritual community, even if you've got one such person, it's always possible to bring the spiritual community up to the level of let's say provisional stability, so therefore insight is a condition of stability of the spiritual community, in a sense, of permanent stability. At least permanent, so long as, those particular individuals, who must be stream-entrants at least, are still alive, or are still within that spiritual community.

So you see the difference, there's the relative stability of the spiritual community which can be kept up by effort, but then there is a, what one might call a permanent stability of the spiritual community, for which a transcendental element is necessary, to maintain which, or to bring which into existence, some members of that spiritual community must have attained a measure of insight, at least to the extent of being stream-entrants. So it's only if you have got stream-entrants within the spiritual community, or those who are at least stream-entrants, that you can have a truly stable spiritual community, because whoever else might fall away, they will not, and so long as they don't - they can't, in fact, fall back - there's always the possibility of the others being brought up to their old level again. But if everybody could slip back, there isn't in the long run, very much hope. So maybe these seven conditions are very relevant, if we make that sort of distinction between the provisional stability of the spiritual community and the real stability of the spiritual community.

**Purna:** There seems to be something of a progression to these sections too.

**S:** Mm. Yes, there is. It is a definite cumulative sequence. (Pause)

Anyway, any further points on that section? (Pause)

Alright if there aren't we'd better leave the last six conditions to the afternoon.

## Break

**S:** Alright, it's section six, the last one.

6

*'I will teach you six conditions, brethren, which prevent decay...*

*So long as brethren shall provide themselves with (the habit of) kindly deeds, kindly words, and kindly thoughts, whether in secret or openly,-*

*So long as the brethren shall be impartial sharers and dividers of whatsoever lawful gains and profits may accrue to them,-even to the mere contents of the begging-bowl,- and shall share them with their virtuous co-mates in the righteous life,-*

*So long as the brethren shall dwell keeping unbroken, undivided, unvaried, and unsoiled those practices which set one free, which are praised by the wise, which are not used for a wrong purpose, which conduce to contemplation,-so long as they shall dwell endowed with the virtue of such practices along with their co-mates in the righteous life, whether in secret or openly,-*

*So long as the brethren shall dwell endowed with right views, that is, the Ariyan View which leads to salvation, which leads one who acts accordantly to the utter destruction of Ill,-along with their co-mates in the righteous life, whether in secret or openly,-*

*So long may the prosperity of the brethren be looked for, not their decay.'*

*D.N. ii. 79-80.*

**S:** There quite a few important points raised here. "*So long as the brethren shall provide themselves with the habit of kindly deed, kindly words, and kindly thoughts, whether in secret or openly*", - so this also is a condition for the stability of the Order, the spiritual community. So what do you think the Buddha is getting at here?

**Geoff:** There should not be internal dissension.

**S:** Well, yes, this obviously he's getting at, but what's the sort of special point he's making?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Positivity?

**S:** Positivity - Mm? A bit more than that, a bit more specific than that.

**Geoff:** Is it, the outward acting of speech?

**S:** It is that.

**Purna:** He's almost stressing the importance of the Order Metta.

**S:** Yes! That's getting much closer. Yes. Yes, this is virtually what it is - the Order Metta is the 'kindly thoughts', but also the 'kindly deeds', the 'kindly words'. It reminds me a bit of that saying I don't know whose it was originally - that one should keep one's friendships in good repair. Friendships don't keep themselves in good repair. It's just like a house, it needs constant attention. In the same way with friendships, and in the same way with your relationships, your communication, with fellow members of the spiritual community. You need to keep up that friendly relationship; you need to keep up your communication. So that requires a definite effort, in the form of kindly deeds, kindly words and kindly thoughts, whether in secret or openly. So therefore the Buddha says, "*So long as brethren*

*shall provide themselves with*" - these things are not going to happen automatically. You've got to take thought, you've got to make a deliberate effort, otherwise you get out of touch, and out of friendship, so to speak, with fellow members of the spiritual community. You've got to consciously and, as it were, deliberately, do kindly things, speak in a kindly way, develop your metta bhavana towards them. This is absolutely essential within the spiritual community. Don't take it for granted that just because you are all definitely members of the same spiritual community therefore you are all friends and therefore in good communication. No. It requires a specific, concrete effort, in the form of kindly deeds, kindly words, and kindly thoughts, all the time, to keep the friendship, in this case the spiritual friendship, in good repair. It will not keep itself in good repair. It will not look after itself. It needs attention on your part, even if it's only to the extent of an enquiry, how someone's getting on, a post-card, a telephone call. You haven't seen someone for a long time, take along a little present, make it clear you're glad to see them. These are all the things that help, and remember them when you do your metta bhavana. Otherwise you get out of contact, out of communication and that friendly relationship is not there. Not that you become unfriendly, no, it's just one goes cold, or it's all held in abeyance. It's no longer alive, no longer operative, and you mustn't allow that to happen. You see what I mean?

**Udaya:** It can be even in quite human ways.

**S:** Indeed, yes! I mean there's no need to think of very highly 'spiritual' ways. I mean send photographs from time to time, just quite ordinary, simple things like that, to keep the avenues of communication open, and keep alive the friendly feeling.

**Udaya:** Keep it positive.

**S:** Keep it positive. I mean, the Order metta bhavana is very good, but even that, this passage suggests, is not enough. There must be the kindly words, which either have to be written or tape recorded, and the kindly actions also. Well, sending a letter is in a way an action, you could get by with that I suppose, but you also do things for other Order Members whether you are in personal contact with them or not.

**End of side one, side two**

**S:** So if you have got members of the spiritual community constantly "*providing themselves with the habit of kindly deeds, kindly words and kindly thoughts whether in secret or openly*" towards one another, then that will certainly be a condition for the stability of the spiritual community. I mean, without those kindly deeds, words and thoughts, well, the spiritual community might have a certain stability, yes, but there wouldn't be much warmth or much life about it. So don't forget that. Don't take your fellow members of the spiritual community for granted. You can do this very easily, even if you live with them, if you are in the same sort of residential community, as a resident of the spiritual community, all under the same roof. You can get into the habit of taking your fellow community members for granted, so to speak.

**Udaya:** A practical application of that in the 'live-in' spiritual community, is making sure that there's time for that ...

**S:** Yes.

**Udaya:** ... sort of, in a sense, setting it up ...

**S:** Mm. Yeah!

**Udaya:** ... because it's very easy, especially if there's a lot of work to be done, which is generally the case, just to let things like that slip.

**S:** Yes. Usually it's the most important things that are among the first casualties, I've noticed, strange to say. Not always but very often. So provide yourselves with these 'kindly' deeds, kindly words and kindly thoughts - "*whether in secret or openly*". That is to say, I suppose he means whether others know about it or not. I mean, maybe the other members of the spiritual community don't always have to know about the kindly things you've done for them or the nice things you've said about them, or about your thoughts of metta. Not necessarily, but, yes, it needs to be explicit to some extent so as to keep alive the communication. So this is quite important. I mean, the Buddha illustrated this in the incident of the monk who was sick and who was not being looked after by the other monks. Do you remember that? And the Buddha and Ananda attended to him, and then the Buddha called the other monks together and said, "Monks, you have no father or mother, no brother or sister, you must look after one another." And he made it an offence, so to speak, for members of the Sangha, members of the spiritual community, to neglect a member who was sick. The kindly deeds, words and thoughts in this instance were lacking. [Pause] So it's an aspects of 'kalyana mitrata', making sure the 'kalyana mitrata', the spiritual friendship, is an operative thing, a living thing, not something which is just taken for granted.

**Udaya:** It's actually quite amazing how easy it is for relationships to break up, especially if you don't find it easy to get on with an Order Member, and you're not living with them and maybe they're not living very close to where you're living and you know ...

**S:** Or even if you get on with them very well, even then, sometimes, it is very difficult to keep up the contact, what to speak of when you don't get on with them very well. If one of your best friends moves away or is very busy or you are very busy, well months, even years can slip past and you haven't corresponded, you haven't met, and the friendship is really in abeyance until next time you meet, but rather sad to let things get to that state. So do a kindly deed if you get the chance, or speak a few kindly words, or at least think kindly thoughts, preferably do all three, all the time, with regards to all the other people within the spiritual community, in the wider sense. I mean, those of you who have been to England, you can probably remember being in contact, quite good positive contact with so many other Order Members there, but maybe you've not written to each other since, in some cases, but when you were together you got on very well. So it's usually time, it's usually just time. I mean maybe you haven't had time to write to them, they haven't had time to write to you. Maybe you just vaguely hear that they're getting on all right, but it's good to make some time if you possibly can, even just to send a card.

**Udaya:** Mm. Purna and I have actually talked about this, and we sort of see it as quite a high priority, especially being in New Zealand, to make a conscious effort to keep in touch, because it's more than just keeping in touch with those individuals, we're so lacking in Order contact in New Zealand, that quite a bit comes through just chatty little letters from other Order Members.

**S:** Yes. I, myself, have been quite sort of conscious of this in recent years as the Order gets bigger and bigger (Laughter) You know, it's so difficult to keep up contact. This is partly why, this time I'm in New Zealand, I'm not even trying to write to everybody as I did last time. I think last time I was here I managed to send a letter or picture postcard to every member of the Order and quite a number of Mitras and friends too, but I'm not even trying to this time, because there are a hundred and eight Order Members, there's two hundred Mitras, (Laughter) and umpteen Friends, what to speak of relations, and so I'm not even trying to keep up with this, otherwise you'd never see me, I'd be scribbling postcards all the time, which would not exactly be the purpose of my visit. It's a bit of a

vicious circle you see, but anyway I've sort of, in a way, compensated by writing a quite lengthy article for *Shabda*, about my experiences in India, so at least Order Members will feel a bit in communication, or a bit in contact, through that. I hope to write a similar letter about my experiences in Malaysia and Australia. And when I get back to England possibly a few notes about my experiences in New Zealand.

So sometimes one has just to do that, to write something that you know a lot of people are going to see, if you write to *Shabda*, in the case of contact with Order Members, if you write to *Shabda* and let everybody know what you're doing, and what your experiences and thoughts and reflections are these days - what's happening to you - then in that way, you can keep in touch, if you just don't have time to write to everybody individually.

Alright, so, next comes, "*So long as the brethren shall be impartial sharers and dividers of whatsoever lawful gains and profits may accrue to them, even to the mere contents of the begging bowl, and shall share them with their virtuous co-mates in the righteous life*" - so what's the sort of principle adumbrated here? This seems to be the principle of common ownership, doesn't it? The Buddha is speaking about the bhikshu Sangha specifically but inasmuch as the bhikshu Sangha represents the spiritual community in a very concentrated form, his remarks apply to the spiritual community in general. "Impartial sharers and dividers of whatsoever lawful gains and profits may accrue to them, even to the mere contents of the begging bowl, and shall share them with their virtuous co-mates in the righteous life" You know, within the spiritual community there is, unavoidably, the sort of tendency or temptation to keep things to oneself, to monopolise. Maybe someone comes to see you, they bring a package of biscuits to give you, you just keep them in the cupboard for yourself; there is that tendency, isn't there? There's that temptation, instead of bringing them out at teatime and giving everybody one or two each. It's better to do things in that way, isn't it? Because sometimes your friends don't like you to do this. I don't know quite why it is. I think it is some sort of attachment - a number of times I've had the experience of people coming to see me, usually nice elderly ladies, and they bring me, maybe, a beautiful big cake, or an enormous box of chocolates, and they say, "These are just for you, you are not to give anything to anybody else, you are to eat it entirely yourself." (Laughter) Sometimes they say this. I think it is some sort of attachment. But, I'm afraid I don't usually follow their instructions (Chuckle) It's alright just to have a little nibble yourself, but share the rest with other people. But this is important, because, I mean, the Buddha specifically mentions the contents of the begging-bowl, that's food. Food is a very basic thing. Psychologists tell us that food represents affection, an inability to give food or share food, is, it is suggested some connection maybe with emotional difficulties - that you can't give affection, can't share affection. So it's quite important that you should be able to share whatever accrues to you with other people in the spiritual community. Not try to have anything just as your exclusive personal property. This of course assumes a high degree of responsibility in the spiritual community itself, because it's well-known that "what is everybody's property, is nobody's property" and doesn't get looked after. You find this with books, or maybe with a typewriter, or a record player. If it's everybody's property, people tend to misuse it and not look after it. That is rather sad. So if it's like that within the spiritual community, well, maybe you do have to keep certain things to yourself, just so you can look after them yourself, because you know that others are careless, but it shouldn't be like that.

**Udaya:** The word has got around, I think they're doing the same thing at Sukhavati, is having sort of custodianship of the equipment, like the vehicles, or office equipment.

**S:** Yes. That is the Buddhist tradition. You find this especially in the Tibetan monasteries, individual monks have custody of certain things, and are responsible for that thing, even though it belongs to the community as a whole, but they have the authority to, as it were, lend it to anyone who wants it

in the community, but to get it back from them, and if they have done any damage to that particular item, to take the matter up with them, and get them to put it right.

**Udaya:** It really does make it difficult when people come into the community and start bringing possessions in. It's alright when they have a backpack and some clothes, and then maybe something to put their clothes in, and maybe just sort of noticing they want to bring a motorbike in. Sometimes (unclear) maybe a stereo as well, and this is what's been happening in the Auckland community, and I've almost felt that things are almost getting away on us at times, and it's really hard to know where to draw the line.

**S:** Yes. Yes. Because some people might say, "Well, you need your books, well in the same way I need my record-player. Why should you have your books and I can't have my record-player?" Or, "You've got that old antique tea-set that your mother left you, well, why shouldn't I have my noisy motorbike?"

**Udaya:** Because if somebody's got something which is quite a big possession and obviously for individual use, something like a vehicle, car or motorbike, that means in a sense the running of that can't really be a legitimate community expense, so they've got to pay for it somehow, which means they've got some source of income, or ...

**S:** Which means they put less into the community?

**Udaya:** Yes. There's a bit of them that's not functioning completely for the community, and it gets really difficult.

**S:** Did you find that in practice, these things are problems?

**Purna:** Not at the moment. I suspect that it's something we'll just have to be aware of.

**S:** I think it is something that sorts itself out, because, as far as I remember, say, at 'Padmaloka', these things have never sort of consciously arisen. There has never been any problem. People, in a sense, have got their own things, their own record-players, or their own books, but there is no difficulty about borrowing, and no one minds at all.

**Purna:** What happens when they leave?

**S:** Well, so far, the tendency has been that they just leave everything. I mean, for instance, Yuvaraj left almost everything, he didn't bother to take anything with him, just a few clothes. He didn't even take all his clothes. He said he didn't want much, he just took a very small pack, about so big, to India, and that was all ...

**Purna:** I think there could be that understanding it would get round some of...

**S:** Mm. ... and there wasn't even any discussion about it. That's what he did.

**Purna:** I think one of the things we're battling with is making people aware of ideals, as much as anything, like this, to really express these conditions, - ah - is that they're quite unfamiliar to those people.

**S:** Ah! You mean to the idea of common ownership?

**Purna:** Common ownership, - um -

**Udaya:** They can be understand it, but not the spirit of it.

**S:** Yes. Yeah. I think to get the feel of the spirit of it, and feel like sharing with others, because you feel so positive towards them, is more important, than working out the minutiae of things in a legalistic sort of way.

**Udaya:** Mm. But even so I find there's the big 'micchaditthi' of that people may feel that they're losing their freedom, but I feel the more I get rid of that I personally own, the more freedom I have.

**S:** Yes. Right!

**Udaya:** So, in a sense, from a completely selfish point of view, you are on the make if you give everything away, or the ownership of everything, because you are no longer burdened with that.

**S:** But on the other hand there is this question of how to ensure that things which belong to the community as a whole are properly looked after. There is this - because you don't solve the problem by saying, "OK, I'll give it to the community." You still have to make proper arrangements for the looking after of that thing, whether it's kitchen utensils or whether it's books, or whether it's the community car.

**Udaya:** We haven't had many difficulties really in that so far because basically the person will just get yelled at by whoever sees that something is being mishandled. But generally it hasn't arisen. Mind you, we haven't got much of worth.

**S:** Ah! I think the attitude of wanting to share is the thing to be emphasised here. And you don't want to share with people to whom you don't feel emotionally positive. Well you can notice this. Supposing you were given a nice cake, maybe, are there certain people you would like to share that with more than with certain others, or not?

\_\_\_\_\_ : (Murmurs)

**S:** Some people you'd enjoy sharing with more - at least, you'd share more readily, more spontaneously. With others it might be more of an effort, or you might have to remember to share. You wouldn't sort of eagerly go and share I mean, have you ever noticed this?

\_\_\_\_\_ : (Murmurs, laughter)

**S:** Some of the communities in England do actually have a common purse, as it were, officially. In many communities it works that way, but some have officially a common purse into which everybody puts everything, and out of which people just take, or are given, what they need. That seems to be very much the trend at the moment. So several of the men's communities have a common purse, and at least one of the women's communities. Amaravati now has a common purse. People are just given pocket money.

**Udaya:** That makes it far more straightforward. It's quite amazing how simple people's needs really are. You begin to realise that formerly maybe when you had an outside job, and weren't living in that sort of community that a lot of things you thought you almost couldn't do without, and spending money on for example, were so unnecessary and instead of spending about fifteen or twenty dollars a week on miscellaneous, you spend fifty cents, if that, you know. You just ...

**S:** I remember in my own experience in India, in my early days, when on principle, for several years, I was not handling money, and not keeping money, and had no money, so it was really remarkable how free one was. Because the thought of even buying a book couldn't arise, because you knew anyway, in advance, you hadn't the money for it. Otherwise if you've got a bit of money jingling in your pocket, you might sometimes be tempted to think, "What can I buy? Where can I go? Which shops?" But if you know that you've no money to buy anything anyway, there's not much point in wanting anything. So it really does cut down on desires, there's no doubt about that.

**Ian:** (Murmurs)

**Geoff:** I myself find, and I'm sure quite a few other people also do, that when you go about, you tend to feel very very nervous if you don't actually have some money on you.

**S:** Umm. So why is this? (Pause) Is it that you are afraid you won't be able to get home, you won't have the money for a bus ticket? Is it that, or is it more than that?

**Geoff:** It must be purely neurotic, because, in many situations you just can't justify it by taxi fares or anything.

**S:** Well, what does it represent?

**Jennine:** Insecurity?

**S:** Insecurity. In what sort of way?

**Purna:** It's addiction. As children we were given money as presents

**S:** Um. As a child one is given money and presents, well, what does one usually do, especially when one is very small?

**Purna:** Spend it on sweets.

**S:** Spend it on sweets.

**Udaya:** It's quite funny. When we first set up our community, there were four of us and Purna and Bernie were always the ones who had to have money in their pockets and Dave and I never worried at all. We only had two cents in our pockets most of the time. You sort of get different people sort of have different needs.

**S:** Yes.

**Purna:** I find it quite a strong security thing on my part. It worried me a lot at first going into town without money in my pocket.

**S:** It's almost as though, maybe, you wouldn't be able to pay your way or some expense would arise, and then you wouldn't be able to meet that expense and that would be a cause of embarrassment to you.

**Purna:** Yes.

**S:** You might have all sorts of fantasies. Well, supposing I fell down and hurt myself and I needed to buy some ointment or something like that, and I didn't happen to have the money, what would I do? This is the sort of fantasy that goes on. "Or suppose I was to meet an old friend and he invited me for a cup of tea and I want to treat him, and I wouldn't have the money, and maybe he didn't have any money either, - what an embarrassing social situation! So the safeguard against all eventualities, anything that might happen, is to have some money in your pocket, you are safe then, you've nothing to fear, whatever might happen.

**Geoff:** (unclear)

**Dharmadhara:** It's a sort of universal fixing.

**Udaya:** There's that expression - as secure or as safe as having money in the bank, you know.

**S:** Yes. Also it means that you don't have to depend on other people. I found this during my own sort of moneyless days in India, that if you had no money, whatever you got was just given by other people, but if you are not willing to not have any money, it means in a way, perhaps, that you don't trust other people very much. You don't feel that if anything went wrong people would come forward and help you. Maybe you don't have that sort of confidence. Maybe you're over self-reliant, or perhaps you don't want to be obligated to other people -

**Purna:** (unclear)

**S:** You feel it would threaten your independence or autonomy, that you would have to rely on other people, instead of doing it all yourself, which is your natural tendency perhaps, in cases.

**Purna:** Yes. A certain "closed-offness" to other people ...

**S:** Yes. Yeah. Mm.

**Purna:** ... that you don't want other people.

**S:** Yeah. Yeah. Because if you've got money then you don't need other people. But I know people, even in England who go around without money quite happily, and just ask friends, "Do you mind buying me a cup of tea?" and they can say it quite naturally and the other person likely as not will say, "Sure, no objection," and will buy them a cup of tea. But there are other people would rather die than ask someone to buy them a cup of tea, especially a perfect stranger. They just couldn't do it. I mean, some people don't like asking for money, or even to borrow money, do they; but others don't mind at all. They ask you quite freely, without apparently any qualms at all. But if you're friends you shouldn't feel any qualms about asking one another for a few cents, or even a few dollars or whatever it is. But some people don't like it. They want to be independent. So that has a positive side, or can have a positive side, but it can also have a slightly negative side.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mm.

**S:** You can want to maintain your independence in a slightly negative way, and not be indebted to others, not be open to others.

**Purna:** ... in the form of a lack of openness ...

**S:** Um. Yes.

**Udaya:** In a sense if someone is really independent then it's no bother to them to depend on people.

**S:** Yes. Right. Because they don't feel dependent.

**Udaya:** Mm. It's a sort of objective need - the situation (unclear) what needs to be done, so you do it (Inaudible)

**Geoff:** (unclear) an enormous freedom when you don't have any money.

**S:** Well, how did you do in Sri Lanka? Did you keep money?

**Geoff:** I kept money, yes.

**S:** Ah, then you didn't observe that precept?

**Geoff:** No. I kept a great swathe of money. I just observed the (unclear)

**S:** Ah. So you weren't a 'sramanera'?

**Geoff:** No! No! No!

**S:** Oh! I thought you were a 'sramana' in all your glory for three whole months (Chuckle) (Laughter)

**Geoff:** You can't do that in Sri Lanka. I was just a normal Upasaka in the Sri Lankan...

**S:** You ought to be able to be a 'sramanera'.

**Geoff:** No, not there. In Thailand and Burma you can just enter the Sangha briefly, but I found out ...

**S:** As a 'sramanera' you don't enter the Sangha strictly speaking.

**Geoff:** (unclear) you can't do that.

**S:** Oh? You used to be able to. You should be able to. Anyone can become a 'sramanera'.

**Geoff:** They look very much down on it, because when you enter the Sangha, you should have the intention of entering it for life and so if you're going to take on the robes for a while and then chuck them off again ...

**S:** That's terrible woolly thinking - Mm - How do they know your intentions anyway? You could easily change your mind in the course of three months. Well, I imagined you floating around in yellow robes, as a model 'sramanera' for three months.

**Geoff:** Oh no, definitely not! (unclear) that was when I got back and got to Auckland centre and just had a penny on me.

**S:** Well there was no problem then I'm sure, (Laughter) There's Uncle Purna and Uncle Udaya. [Laughter]

\_\_\_\_\_ : (unclear) were there. (Laughter)

**Dharmadhara:** I said, "Hi, Geoff," and he said, "Have you got ten dollars?" (Laughter)

**Geoff:** It was quite strange because I went to lunch with (unclear), I had no money, and I had this experience of having to ask them to buy me a cup of tea, as you say. I could hardly get the words out.

**S:** Mm. Yes. And also there is something of this sort, as between men and women - I mean, certainly in England, the man always pays. You know that, or do you have it here? That it is not sort of proper to allow the woman to pay, I mean, even to pay her share, and some men resent it very much. I remember once a few years ago, Vajrayogini came over to England and she wanted to take me out to lunch, so I said, OK, and I decided on the place because she didn't know that part of London. So we had lunch together - and she's one of our more well-to-do Order Members if I may so - so come the end of the meal, the waitress brought the bill and she picked it up and paid it, and she told me afterwards she was quite surprised that I didn't make at least a formal protest. [Laughter] So I said, "No, I have no objections to you (Laughter). So she was quite surprised, even though she sort of knew me quite well, so I said, "Well, look, don't forget my background in India. I was a monk for so many years, I was quite accustomed to have people pay for everything for me." But she thought that I'd sort of be affected by that English social tradition and wouldn't be quite comfortable having a woman pick up the bill when we went out to lunch together, but I just didn't mind at all. But she did say afterwards that men friends that she had in say, Holland, even quite good men friends, would have felt quite uncomfortable at the idea of her paying the bill if they went out to lunch together.

So it's a specific form of that same kind of thing, isn't it? . Because logically there's no reason if the woman's working, and especially if she has got more money than you, why shouldn't she pay for you? Or if you're both more or less on the same footing, split the bill, or you pay this time, she pays next time. But that the poor bloke has got to pay every time because of some sort of social convention, it doesn't seem really quite fair, does it? It doesn't seem psychologically healthy either. It's as though he feels that there's some sort of position or prestige, or even dominance that he's got to keep up, and give expression to in that particular way - that the woman has got to be indebted to him, and it can't be the other way round. Do you have it in New Zealand too?

\_\_\_\_\_ : (Murmurs)

**S:** So remember that, girls, the next time he takes you out, insist on paying. (Laughter) Decondition him.

\_\_\_\_\_ : (Garbled)

**Megha:** I don't know whether Women's Lib has tended to counteract this, but especially when you got to 'Varsity there seems to be more of this ...

**S:** I'm sure among students there's a great deal more freedom in this sort of way. It's only more conventional older people who are affected by these things - I'm sure students don't bother.

\_\_\_\_\_ : (Inaudible)

**S:** Umm?

**Udaya:** (unclear) not paying for things, the woman (unclear)

**Geoff:** Poor Jennine doesn't usually have a cent left when she sees me!

**Dharmadhara:** I must admit I've felt a bit uncomfortable at times being a student, and being workless and being subsidised on some occasions. I did feel uncomfortable with that.

**Geoff:** Actually we do have that thing, before when I was hearing it was going be maybe you and Jennine are all students, and I was thinking, "Horrors, just me at the (unclear) of these three students", and now it's poor Achala in the same boat (unclear) but not too (unclear)

**Achala:** Ah! But only temporarily (Laughter)

**S:** Well, in England there are some people still, older people, who feel quite guilty, and quite ashamed about being on the dole, even if they've worked for twenty, thirty years, and they have to go on the dole for a few weeks, they feel bad about it, though they've earned it. It's their own money that they're taking back. But they don't feel it like that at all, they feel that they are living on charity and they don't like that: younger people don't feel like that, but older people sometimes do, or very often, do, if they find themselves in that position. They say, "I don't want to live on charity. I'd rather starve!" they say. It's their own money actually, that they've paid in all those years but they don't see it like that.

**Achala:** Maybe if somebody abuses it to the extent that they could work and they've done vert little, would that, perhaps reasonable to feel ashamed?

**S:** Well, such people usually don't. Paradoxically it's the people who have every right to draw the dole, for whom it was intended, they feel unwilling, they feel reluctant. And usually these older people with this overdeveloped sense of self-reliance. I mean, younger people very often do stretch things more in their own favour, and sometimes carry on drawing the dole longer than they morally should, leaving aside the purely legalistic side of things.

**Geoff:** The thing I'm not very happy about in some of the FWBO communities that the people are on the dole, and there is a more or less deliberately not (unclear) because it's not something that society would actually sanction if it knew about it.

**S:** Well, it depends whether you are breaking the law or not. If you are not breaking the law, well, again, why shouldn't you?

**Geoff:** I don't know. I tend to feel, um, that ...

**S:** You needn't legally, I mean, this is how it is in England, I don't how it is here. You've got the right to refuse, I think it is up to three jobs. If you don't happen to like them, or for any reason you don't want to take them, you have the legal right to refuse those. But if you refuse more, then they have the right to take you off the dole. I mean, there are people who wangle the dole by making false statements, and that of course one should never do, because that would be 'wrong speech'.

**Geoff:** It seems to me as if we're really taking money out of the pockets of people who don't want to give it to you.

**S:** Well, that's happening all the time. You know, people are taking money out of your pocket for all sorts of things you have no wish to spend your money on, like armaments.

**Voices:** (All at once, so inaudible)

**S:** But, you can't really carry the argument too far because you might say, well, supposing you take the bus to a Buddhist meeting, but lots of people wouldn't like you to go to a Buddhist meeting out of the money that they pay in the form of taxation that the buses are subsidised, and they would be quite unhappy for you to use their bus, as it were, to go to a Buddhist meeting, but you can't take that argument into consideration, because the money is provided, the facilities are provided, that every citizen has the right to use, for his or her own purposes, in his or her own way.

**Geoff:** (unclear)

**S:** But why is that? If you are not breaking the law, how can anyone object?

**Geoff:** I think there is a considerable quantitative of difference between taking a bus and going on the dole. The specific intention of not going on the ...

**S:** ... but if it is not, if it is not illegal, what you are doing?

**Geoff:** I don't think that's the main consideration really because we don't agree, a lot of people in the movement don't agree with the activities of say, certain Western industrialists and so forth. But it's definitely not illegal what they are doing. If for instance we had an FWBO society and this person was using some part of the FWBO society to subsidise his own money-grabbing activities, then we'd find ourselves in disagreement with him surely.

**S:** Yes, but in this particular case, in the case of the dole, it's a question of the legality or illegality. This is the consideration here. I mean, unless you were very, very sort of psychologically sensitive, you wouldn't consider the feelings of people who didn't agree with your particular ideology. Or, well you just would be completely immobilised.

**Geoff:** Mm.

**S:** So if you don't do anything illegal why should you not live off the dole for a certain period, when the law in fact permits you to do so, in fact when provision has been made for you to do so.

**Geoff:** Oh! I see! You are saying as long as we're taking into account feelings, then we should also follow the guidelines they've laid down.

**S:** No. I'm not saying that. I'm saying that the dole system for instance, has been set up. It has been set up to give you the dole, that is the whole idea. That if you are not working for any reason, you should get the dole. This is the whole idea of it, to give you the money, but clearly, under certain conditions. So so long as you observe those conditions you have the legal right, and therefore, presumably, the moral right, to take that money. If you get it under false pretences, then you put yourself in the wrong, both legally and morally, but simply living off the dole for such time as the law permits you, having made no false statements, there's nothing wrong in that, unless of course you disagree with the dole system itself - you regard it as immoral, in which case, yes, even though it's legal, don't make use of it, but that's your decision, you can't make that decision for other people.

So maybe you're not sort of comfortable with the dole system for the sort of reasons that we were talking about.

**Geoff:** Mm. I think personally the objection I've got is as I've outlined it.

**S:** But everybody has to decide for himself. I mean, if you feel that drawing the dole is morally

wrong, well, yes, don't draw it, by any means, even though you're legally permitted to do so, but don't expect other people to necessarily feel the same way. Because as I've said, that provision has been made by the law. It's the intention of the legislators or whoever, that you should get that money, under certain conditions. So if you fulfil all those conditions, why should you not get it? But of course you must not make any false statement or false declaration.

**Ian:** Is there a time limit in New Zealand on how long you can stay on the dole or is it (unclear)

\_\_\_\_\_ : I don't know.

**Udaya:** I don't know if they've put that time limit yet.

**Ian:** (Inaudible)

**Dharmadhara:** They do have retraining or remotivation schemes. (Giggles)

**Ian:** Ah! I see. In other words you aren't supposed to legally stay on the dole.

**Dharmadhara:** No. They just try and get you reinterested in working.

**S:** Mm.

**Dharmadhara:** But apparently you can stay on for years.

**S:** I think, in England, you can stay on it indefinitely, so long as they cannot find you a job, and you're entitled to refuse up to three jobs. I mean, you just might not like those jobs, and also you're supposed to hold yourself free to take any job. That is to say you're not get involved in any kind of work that would prevent you taking a job at a day's notice, and if you go away from the area, you are to inform them and arrange it with them. Say, if you were to go on holiday, or wanted to go on retreat, you'd have to arrange it with the local office, this is what happens in England. Provided you do that, it's alright. But you shouldn't just go away without telling them. So if you fulfil all these conditions you're legally entitled to draw the dole. But supposing you break any of those conditions, and supposing you refuse up to three jobs, then they've got the right to review the situation and if they think fit, take you off the dole, which is fair enough.

**Ian:** So you can have quite a long time.

**S:** But I don't think you can say that because certain people wouldn't like you to be on the dole at all, therefore you shouldn't be on it. It's like saying that because certain people wouldn't like you, say, not to work in industry or in a useful sort of office, therefore you should work there, because they would be unhappy if you didn't. Much of the time you've got to go against people. (Pause) But don't feel guilty about it, do it boldly, and as far as possible do it openly.

**Ian:** There's something about people not wanting to go on the dole - pride, I think.

**S:** Yeah. Well, there are the two extremes. There is the extreme of over self-reliance, and the other is the extreme of dishonestly attaining benefits to which you are not entitled. Both extremes are not very healthy psychologically. Take what you are entitled to by all means, but no more. Take it if you need it. If you don't need it, don't take it.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Yes!

**Purna:** The fact that it seems to be being missed is the deliberate economic policy to have people on the dole, rather than have them employed, a certain percentage ...

**S:** Yeah.

**Purna:** ... which in the case, if you buck the dole system, you're bucking society.

\_\_\_\_\_ : (Inaudible)

**S:** Well this is certainly true in England.

**Purna:** It's the same here, it's a deliberate policy to have a certain level of unemployment.

**S:** Mm.

**Geoff:** Although it's not stated.

**S:** Mm.

**Purna:** It's fairly recent.

\_\_\_\_\_ : It's fairly recent in New Zealand.

**S:** Mm. It's cheaper to have people, in inflationary terms, it's cheaper to have people on the dole.

**Udaya:** Apparently Schumacher was pointing this out that societies geared their countries to run at maximum efficiency, which means a certain percentage on the dole, and he saw that if that was case the government should make adequate provisions for those who ...

**S:** People are also thinking of the dole and unemployment in terms of enforced leisure now, and that the quantity of employment should be more evenly distributed. So that you don't have a lot of people in full employment and a small number of people without any work at all. You have everybody doing some work and everybody having quite a bit more leisure. I mean, these are all ideas that are being discussed now, even within the Trades Union movement, which is pretty conservative. So the dole, in some ways, means, the government paying you not to worsen the inflationary situation by actually working.

**End of tape five, tape six**

**Udaya:** What it could mean is that you are just saying, "Well, if the government wants a certain amount of people not working, on the dole, they volunteer to be on the dole ...

**S:** Yes, there are some people who would be definitely unhappy without a job, who would much prefer to have a job. So why shouldn't you change places with one? (Laughter)

**Udaya:** Why should you stand in their way?

**S:** Yeah. Yeah. Anyway that's taken us rather a long way from 'sharing', but the Buddhist principle you could say, certainly within the spiritual community, is sharing. Willing sharing. Spontaneous sharing. Alright, "*So long as the brethren shall dwell, keeping unbroken, undivided, unvaried, and*

*unsoiled, those practices which set one free, which are praised by the wise, which are not used for a wrong purpose, which conduce to contemplation, so long as they shall dwell endowed with the virtue of such practices along with their co-mates in the righteous life, whether in secret or openly." So that's a condition conducive to the stability of the spiritual community. So what would be an example of those practices which set one free?*

**Megha:** Meditation?

**S:** Meditation, or the Puja. Let's take the Puja because this will give us a better example when we come to keeping them 'unbroken, undivided, unvaried and unsoiled'. So clearly, if you keep up the spiritual practice, if you keep up the meditations, if you keep up the Mindfulness of Breathing, the Metta Bhavana, even if you keep up the communication exercises, you keep up the visualisation practices, you keep up the Puja, all of this means that some spiritual activity is going on, that you are having recourse to those things that do help you to develop spiritually, so this surely contributes to the stability of the spiritual community. But the Buddha further says that you should keep them up "unbroken, undivided, unvaried and unsoiled". So what does that mean? How do you say keep up the practice of the seven-fold Puja, unbroken? "Unbroken", suggests, well, you keep it up regularly, continuously. Not you do it for a few weeks, and then drop it for a few months. Keep it up unbroken. And then 'undivided', what do you think that might mean? (Pause)

**Purna:** Not just using bits of it to suit your purpose.

**S:** Ah! Right. Yes. Use the whole of it. 'Unvaried' (Laughter) (Murmurs)

**S:** Well, not introducing too many variations, well, not for subjective, perhaps neurotic reasons. If circumstances seem to demand a discrete skilful modification, well, surely if there is a general consensus within the spiritual community, well feel free to introduce that, but not for purely private, subjective reasons. And 'unsoiled'. How do you soil a practice?

\_\_\_\_\_ : By not taking it seriously.

**S:** By not taking it seriously, by mixing something extremist with it perhaps. By not doing it in the right sort of way, in the right frame of mind. And also ...

**Geoff:** I was just thinking, another one of the habits we used to follow when we used to do the Puja, was, we used to have a tea ceremony during the Puja. Would that be 'soiling' the Puja:

**S:** I'm not sure what you mean by during the Puja? Do you mean at the end, or at a sort of strategic point?

**Geoff:** I forget precisely. Do you remember Achala?

**Achala:** At Natiawa Camp, we had it between meditations.

**Purna:** At the end of the walking and chanting.

**Geoff:** Yes.

**S:** Because I remember this tea ceremony was introduced in England in the very early days on retreats when people needed a little bit of, what shall I say, - variety on the retreat - as far as I remember it was not done in the middle of the Puja; as far as I remember it was done after the Puja

and meditation. We had the Puja, then a short meditation, and then in silence a sort of English adaptation of the tea ceremony, which basically meant everybody having a cup of tea together in the shrine room in complete silence. It was brought in the tea-pot and the cups very quietly in a slightly formal sort of way, and everybody just sort of sat around sipping this - very often it was Japanese jasmine tea - just sipping it in silence for a little while before breaking things up. But this was something extra, sort of added on; it certainly wasn't introduced into the seven fold Puja. Though I mean, yes, this it is quite acceptable. It's occasionally done on retreats even now.

**Megha:** What about doing the meditation after the sixth verse, before the seventh verse?

**S:** We used to do that sometimes, yes. I think this is a permissible variation.

**Udaya:** (Inaudible) More often than not (unclear) in Auckland as well. It's quite good coming out of meditation straight into the Heart Sutra.

**S:** Yes.

**Purna:** I think the biggest illegitimate variation has been this thing of (unclear) mantras, particularly the 'impromptu' mantras.

**S:** What do you mean by impromptu mantras?

**Purna:** Ah - free for all basically (Laughter) - anyone in the room that wanted to lead a mantra, more often than not, any mantra.

**S:** Um. Well I think here it's very important that one should remember that there should be a leader, who is like the conductor of the orchestra, whose responsibility is to keep everything in harmony, to ensure that no incongruous or inharmonious elements are introduced. Otherwise someone might be in a certain mood and start chanting or shouting out something which just spoils everything for everybody else.

**Purna:** Well, that's happened!

**S:** Umm. Yeah. I mean this is just individualism in the name of freedom. One just shouldn't have this.

**Geoff:** I still remember those totally favourably! Especially the very long OMs. I see the point of the other thing though.

**S:** Well, perhaps there is a place for the release of anarchy, but not in the context of the Puja.

**Geoff:** What about the readings - should they be from the scriptures or ...?

**S:** Well, here again I think it is the tact of the leader that must determine things. Usually the readings are taken from Buddhist texts, but there have been occasions on which a poem has been read or, say something from Blake, but people who have been present, on such occasions, report that even a good poem seems quite out of place and not in keeping. I think it would have to be very, very carefully chosen to be appropriate. Otherwise even a very good poem, good from a poetic point of view, could be experienced as a sort of 'let-down' in the midst of the Puja because it would be on such a different wavelength.

**Udaya:** So the important thing here is that basically all readings go through the leader of the puja.

**S:** I think so, yes.

**Udaya:** This is something that hasn't always been done in New Zealand, as well up until very recently.

**S:** Well it depends also how well you know one another. I mean if it's an Order Member, any Order Member, ideally, should have the sense to know what would be appropriate.

**Purna:** Perhaps ...

**S:** Well, one hopes so. But if there is any doubt well it must be the person who is leading the Puja, or leading the retreat as the case may be, who should decide. If there is any disagreement it's always discussed in the Order Meeting in the evenings, say, on retreat. But as regards the Puja, it's the person who leads who usually in fact selects the reading and asks someone to read.

**Purna:** Well, even the insistence that every reading be referred to the leader before the Puja has met some resistance, unfortunately.

**S:** Well, then perhaps it would be better if the leader was responsible for selecting the reading and asking somebody to do the reading. This is quite important - even who you ask, because some people, despite maybe many other good qualities, they just read so badly. It spoils it for everybody. So you need to ask someone to read whom you know will do justice to that passage, who will read it beautifully and in an inspiring way, not someone who will mumble their way through it and mispronounce words, and really mangle the whole thing. Just as you don't want someone leading the Puja who just doesn't know how to do that, and who will spoil the evening for everybody. It isn't always easy to read certain texts you need to select the person, if you can, quite carefully, or even not choose a text which is very difficult to read, maybe with lots of Sanskrit words, or Tibetan words and so on, or with a very awkward grammatical structure.

So all these things must be given careful attention, otherwise, you don't produce the desired overall effect. I mean, in England we know that there are certain Order Members who are very good at readings, who read really beautifully. Others who, unfortunately, can't do that, so they aren't usually asked, unless it's something very simple and straightforward indeed, on some quite small occasion. So no unwarranted variations please.

Yes, also it says, "*which are praised by the wise and which are not used for a wrong purpose.*" Now, how could you use one of these practices for a wrong purpose? Take for instance the example of the Puja, the seven-fold Puja - could you conceivably ever use it for a wrong purpose?

**Udaya:** Ah, I think that has happened, actually.

**S:** Mm.

**Udaya:** With the chanting in the Puja, I've felt a lot of the time, the way people were chanting various chants and mantras was very indulgent. It was sort of like cashing in on a sort of good feeling that you sometimes get from chanting with other people and they're not really interested in getting into the spirit or doing the thing for its own sake, it's almost been holding some of the chanting or the mantras to ransom to get this good feeling out of it, you get sort of super-dramatic sort of Vajrapani mantras, or Padmasambhava, or something like that, and people are really, I felt, misusing or cashing in on the energy that can be got out of these mantras and chanting.

**S:** Mm. Mm. Well, sometimes - I noticed this a few years ago in England - trying to express, or trying to get out or even get rid of what seems to me to be quite negative emotions through the Puja, by your forcible and harsh and rough way of chanting. This seems very, very unfortunate, and very undesirable. We had quite a spate of this about three years ago, or four years ago, and I'd been out of circulation for a bit, so I hadn't been aware of this, but suddenly encountered it, and we had to discuss it and sort it out because some people, apparently, had quite a bit of negative emotion within them, and they used to try to let it out during the Puja - I think this was more or less unconscious - almost shouting the Puja in a very rough discordant sort of way. Just using the Puja to get something off their chests. So this would be definitely be a misuse of the practice. If you feel like that, and you feel that you can't chant properly well, just sit quietly and listen to other people chanting, and try to get some positivity from that, but don't use the Puja as a channel of expression for your own negativity, your own negative mood. You know the sort of thing I'm referring to? I traced this on a particular occasion mainly to two particular people, whose voices were rather loud and personalities rather strong, so they tended to influence the chanting, though they weren't leading, they tended to influence it very, very strongly, and I expressed it then by saying that it was as though they were pumping something really quite black into the Puja, which seems the last thing that one should do. So this would be a misuse of the practice. You are using a spiritual practice in a sort of psychological way and even then not using it very skilfully.

**Purna:** A more subtle version of a similar thing is being bored and wanting entertainment out of the Puja.

**S:** Ah, yes! Yeah. Or doing it, especially if you're leading it, in a theatrical sort of way.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Yeah.

**S:** ... For effect, as it were. Not allowing it to make it's own effect.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mm.

**S:** You think you've got to manipulate it so that it produces an effect. You've either got to do it in a ultra pious way, or an ultra lively way, or an ultra impassive way, something of that sort. One can see little hints and vestiges of that from time to time, but just do it straightforwardly, soberly, according to your natural feeling. Do it 'straight', to use that expression, a 'straight' Puja. Some time ago, when I was just occasionally taking the Puja, one or two people remarked it was quite a relief to have a 'straight' Puja (Laughter) After all these light theatricals, as it were, but that's all straightened out now, or just a very faint tinge is still around.

**Udaya:** Here again something that has - theatrical pujas etc., etc. -is something that can be combatted by more contact.

**S:** Yeah.

**Udaya:** I can remember the first time I went to England, getting a bit of a shock - seeing that's not the way we do things back home. It wasn't quite right, it took us a lot of changing.

**S:** Not that they're always done rightly in England even, people do slip up sometimes.

**Udaya:** But the more contact we have with more Order Members, the more people, the less likelihood there is of a variation.

**S:** Yes. That is true. Or the less likelihood of some really eccentric variation being established as the norm, in some remote centre (Laughter) We don't want any heretical Pujas! (Laughter) Well, there is such a thing as permissible and acceptable variation, but not anything idiosyncratic or for purely subjective, not to say neurotic, reasons, and certainly not without the consensus of all the Order Members concerned with that particular community or that particular centre.

*"So long as the brethren shall dwell, endowed with right views, that is, the Ariyan view, which leads to salvation, which leads one who acts accordingly, to the utter destruction of Ill along with their co-mates in the righteous life, whether in secret or openly".* So 'right views' - - this is a condition of the stability of the Order - no 'micchaditthis'. "Micchaditthis" really disturb the stability of the spiritual community. There are quite a few micchaditthis which one can fall victim to. I don't know whether you have any special New Zealand micchaditthis of your own.

**Purna:** Quite a few (Laughter)

**S:** I started making a little list of micchaditthis. I might give a little talk on them one day - English micchaditthis, by the way - though some of them might be prevalent here too.

**Purna:** Lots of the New Zealand ones are, I think, are involved with family and children, and (unclear) to the spiritual life.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Relationships.

**Udaya:** And also, well, not even nationalism, but sort of in the individual FWBO centres as separate from other FWBO centres, which in a sense they are, legally and all the rest, but...

**S:** But the Order Members running them are not separate from other Order Members elsewhere.

**Udaya:** They're sort of getting into a little sort of a sort of 'centre consciousness', but in a negative way, you know ...

**S:** A sort of centre loyalty in a narrow way.

**Purna:** Basically, feelings for 'New Zealand' as opposed to 'England'.

**S:** It's the territorial imperative at work again. It's the little 'Robin' sign going up. (Laughter)

**Purna:** Also we're all equal out here.

**S:** Ah! (Laughter)

**Purna:** A sort of pseudo-democracy.

**S:** We had a lot of that in England, till it was stamped out! (Loud laughter)

**Purna:** It was unfortunately encouraged in Auckland for instance, by allowing Mitras on the council, which just ended up confusing.

**Udaya:** And allowing them to take classes and pujas.

**S:** Well, occasionally it might be unavoidable, but one should make it clear that it is quite exceptional, and have it generally accepted, but not that anybody outside the Order has a right to be on the council.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mm.

**S:** I mean maybe it is appropriate in a few instances for a mitra of long-standing to be on the council in the absence of an available Order Members (inaudible)

**Purna:** ... but not as a matter of course ...

**S:** ... but not as a matter of course or a matter of democratic right.

**Udaya:** Yeah. I think the distinction, just the outward distinction between Order Members, Mitras and Friends, is quite a critical one.

**S:** Yeah.

**Udaya:** ... and it's something that has already been made by virtue of the mitra or Friend who may become an Order Member one day, seeing that there really is a difference and there really is a transition, and that things really do change.

**S:** Yeah.

**Udaya:** Otherwise they'll think it's just a sort of continuation except you've just got one of those white things around your neck and a name which takes two weeks to learn to pronounce, when there is a lot more than that going on.

**S:** So it really means, basically, clear thinking. Clarity of thought with regard to the Dharma and one's own spiritual life is essential. Because 'micchaditthis' tend to be a bit private, if you see what I mean. They are influenced by subjective factors, and the stronger is your own subjectivity, the more you are taken away from the spiritual community.

**Purna:** I think this has also got to be conjoined with a receptivity to the ...

**Megha:** Dharma. Yes.

**Purna:** ... people who can point out 'micchaditthis', and be prepared to see that you have 'micchaditthis'.

**S:** Yes. And in a way, I mean living in or being brought up in the society that one is one can hardly help having 'micchaditthis' in fact. They are bound to be there as assumptions in your thinking, even though you may not, as yet, be conscious of them. (Pause) 'Micchaditthis' are very slippery sort of things. They usually are present in the form of unconscious assumptions, and therefore have to be dragged out into the open, into the light of consciousness, and there examined, and seen for what they are.

**Udaya:** What are some common ones in England?

**S:** I forget but I can get my little notebook. I've written down a few of them but just for your amusement, I'll mention one or two. I think I've mentioned one already. I've only just recently started

noting them down, so there aren't very many. One I've already mentioned over the weekend, but let's have a look. There are a few.

**Udaya:** The top twenty 'micchaditthis'.

**S:** Yes, the one I mentioned was viewing one's own action as something that happens to one - you remember that? Saying, 'I couldn't do it', - 'I wasn't able to come', when in fact that is what you decided to do.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Mm.

**S:** Ah! Here is one I came across a lot of in England. That one should not perform even a good action unless one's motive for doing it is pure. And then, oh, 'that one should be original at all costs'. (Chuckle) You've probably come up against this one, in some form or other. Or - 'that there are only two kinds of energy, male energy and female energy.' [Laughter] Or - 'that one can learn from mistakes therefore it's good to commit mistakes.' You see the sort of thing I have in mind. (Pause) Anyway maybe we should start jotting down your peculiarly New Zealand 'micchaditthis'.

**Purna:** Another one I just thought of was 'the private life'.

**S:** Oh yes! That's a very good one. Lend me a pencil (Loud laughter)

**S:** Yes. Mm.

**Purna:** That one had a right not to evolve part of the time.

**S:** Yes! That's a very good one. This one came up in England quite a lot from time to time.

**Purna:** Conjoined with weekends.

**S:** That's right! It flourishes over the weekends! (loud laughter) like a weed that grows with great rapidity over the weekend, and if you're not careful it smothers the whole week. It might even take over for months at a time. So these are the sort of 'micchaditthis' that have to be removed if the spiritual community is to be a stable one.

Just one more point before we close, because it is nearly getting on for five o'clock. The Buddha mentions more than once - "*Whether in secret or openly*". And this is a great emphasis in Buddhism, in the Buddha's teaching generally, of having the inner and the outer as one. No disharmony, no discrepancy, nothing that you hide, nothing that you keep hidden, no private life! which people are not allowed to see, not allowed to scrutinise, and this contributes to the integrity and integration of your whole being, if you can be open and honest, and join the inner and the outer, so that you have no private life, because you are prepared to be completely open about it; you've nothing to be ashamed of, and even if you have, you are prepared to be open about it, and at least not keep it from the scrutiny of your spiritual friends.

**Purna:** I think this is how a community is quite valuable in that you are often provided with the context where you can 'come out' and be quite open about feelings and personal habits that have been little secrets till then.

**S:** Yes. Because in a way you've no alternative. Because living with other people, I mean, I remember this in the army. If you are all living in the barrack room, how could you keep anything

hidden? If, for instance, you liked to smoke in bed, how could you keep it hidden? Everybody knew. Or if you had other funny little habits, everybody knew! There was no hope, no possibility of concealing anything, and in the end people stopped bothering.

**Geoff:** Maybe we should have barracks set up here.

**S:** Maybe. Well, on retreat, you sometimes have a sort of dormitory situation. In some of the men's communities you do, I'm told, and I only repeat this on hearsay, that in the women's communities there is a bit of resistance to this and they definitely like their own separate rooms, and not sharing with other women, but men very often seem to like to share, and don't mind, in fact they are quite happy about it. Five or six or ten or twelve in the same room together, at least, for a while.

**Udaya:** Yes. I was thinking at Suvarnaketu, we wanted to consciously move towards that, to sort of break up that territorial, sort of 'private' space sort of thinking, and also where you can stash all your possessions that aren't the rest of the communities, and also sort of shuffle people around a bit.

**S:** Mm. I think that is a quite good thing, but I think you have to be careful not to introduce it prematurely, or force it on to people who are really not ready. There is a sense in which you need space, in which you need privacy, quite legitimately. There is that too, which mustn't be overlooked, but you mustn't be allowed to use that in a sort of neurotic way. You mustn't allow yourself to use it in a sort of neurotic way. You need to be with people: you need to be on your own. I mean, if you were living in a community and there was no opportunity of ever being on your own, except when you were in the toilet perhaps, that wouldn't be a very positive sort of situation. But certainly move people around a bit so that they don't think "oh this room is my room", all that sort of thing.

In Sukhavati it was a very good situation from that point of view, because someone remarked to me a few days before I left, "Even your bed isn't your own". You might come back and find someone else sleeping in it. Someone who's just arrived from some other centre; or have someone on your floor over the weekend. What to speak of your room or your floorspace, even your bed isn't your own! That is quite good up to a point.

**Geoff:** It feels like a sort of a glimpse of freedom, in a way.

**S:** Glimpse of freedom? Well, you're free to avail yourself of 'freedom'. (Pause)

Anyway that really brings us to the end of the conditions.

*"So long may the prosperity of the brethren be looked for, not their decay".*

So that's the attitude today as it was in the Buddha's time. One need not apply it to the specifically, as it were, inverted commas 'monastic' context, but it holds good of all spiritual communities to the extent that they are spiritual communities. (Pause)

It's a great relief in fact when you can be open with people, especially when you can be completely open with all the people with whom you live, as members of a spiritual community. It's a very sort of pleasant, refreshing, even an exhilarating feeling, that you don't need to keep anything from anybody, whatever it is.

**Udaya:** It just (unclear)

**S:** Yes. Mm. Yes. I was quite pleased when somebody asked Indrajala what bringing you to

Wellington and he said, "Erotic interests". Somebody else might have said, "Well, I've been shifting around, and my objects are this, that and the other, but he came straight out with it. (Laughter) This is very good. This is what one needs. Be honest! (Laughter) But a lot of people wouldn't. I mean, this is what I call the "x" factor; the factor which is always suppressed but which is always operative and influential. And I sometimes say that the 'x' factor is usually the sex factor, but people don't like to admit it, that their lives are governed by these factors, or this factor, to an extent greater than they would like to admit, so that in this way, it is quite refreshing when someone comes right out into the open, and just says so, straightforwardly, no beating about the bush.

**Geoff:** This is one of the rather unfortunate things about (unclear) the centre - that we would have to be (unclear)

**S:** Um? I do not follow your thinking.

**Geoff:** I said, not being fully open, as with somebody in a community, or even if it's (unclear) you just feel quite threatened.

**S:** Well, clearly, in forming a spiritual community you will take into consideration this fact, and form it of such people with whom it is actually possible, with a bit of effort at least, to be completely open, not with people whom a little openness will just send flying out through the window. (Pause) In some of the communities in England, there's a degree of openness which is really admirable. One is very pleased to see that. This is the sort of thing that should be developed. It doesn't necessarily mean inflicting your current psychological state on those who live under the same roof with you, it doesn't mean that, not doing that in an indulgent way, but just be open and sharing, as it were, what you are, not trying to keep a private corner to yourself which only you know about, in a sneaking sort of way, or sort of mysterious comings and goings and no one knows where you've gone and what you've been doing, and you clearly don't want to be asked, and aren't happy about telling. This isn't a good situation within a spiritual community.

**Ian:** I think it's quite deeprooted wanting to have these little secrets. Obviously it's not positive but I think it's quite deeprooted.

**S:** Mm. Well, most often because you're ashamed of this, that or the other. Or you may even dislike the people with whom you're living and not want to share with them for that reason. In that case if you dislike them very much, you shouldn't be living with them.

**Ian:** There's always this thing of independence, though, not wanting to burden other people with your - maybe your problems or ...

**S:** Well, that's true up to a point, if you can deal with them on your own, deal with them on your own, why waste other people's time with problems you can sort out yourself? But if you really need a bit of help, and you really need to open up with someone, well, don't hesitate to do so.

**Geoff:** I quite often hear about this in several communities, if you're angry for any reason with someone you should go up to them and tell them, but I don't really agree with that, some people say that if you don't tell them, then it will fester and grow, but that doesn't have to be so at all.

**S:** No. If you are actually working on it. That's the condition. And it may help sometimes to admit your feelings to the person concerned, but it isn't an invariable rule that you have to do that in order to be able to deal with that particular feeling. Maybe you can handle it on your own. Maybe they'll never know because you've succeeded in getting over that feeling, and are then able to relate to them

in a positive way, so there's no point in mentioning it, if you can handle it yourself.

**Achala:** Is it that if you really don't get on with somebody, you'd be better not to live with them?

**S:** Yeah. Mm.

**Achala:** If it was on, say, purely personality differences, then maybe it might be better to stay with it, if ...

**S:** If you feel that you really can cope and you're both going to make an effort and that would really help both of you, but if the fact that you can't get on with them on a certain level, is going to be too much for you, at any particular point, or any particular stage, it's better not to live with them. "Better" in the sense of don't take on more than you can really comfortably manage.

**Megha:** Mm!

**Udaya:** Sort of if you can see it really 'going' somewhere, or the potential of it going somewhere, something coming of it, well then you can give it a fair chance and if it just seems to be going on and on and on, well, then -

**S:** Yes! Right! It's better to part. Maybe you can relate better from a distance. After all you're not married to one another, not usually anyway, not even if it's a mixed community, so why not part? Think about it carefully, obviously, but don't just let it drag on if it seems that no good will ever come of it.

**Udaya:** Or even that - you could look at it more positively and say something much better may come of our not being together.

**S:** Yes. Mm. Right!

**Udaya:** You might even -

**S:** Well one has sometimes seen that, when certain people have left certain communities, well, they've blossomed and so did the community, and since they're both blossoming they've only got to relate, and so they are much better to each other. So the 'parting' has been a means of their coming together. Perhaps one should look at it like that.

Anyway perhaps we should leave it there, having got through the whole text actually, all the conditions for the stability of the Order, which the Buddha mentions.

**THE END**

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