

## **Womens Order Convention 1985.**

### **General Question and answer session.**

**Questions and Answers on  
Chapters 12 (The Human Situation) of the Three Jewels  
begins on page 74 of the page numbering  
given within this document**

**Chapter 14 (The Goal) begins on page 156**

WOQ/A 1 - 1

Those Present:- The Venerable Sangharakshita. Dharmacarinis : -Dharmadinna Vidyasri, Malini , Megha, Sanghadevi, Sridevi, Varabhadri, Sarvabhadri, Gunabhadri, Ashokasri, Padmasuri, Vajrasuri, Vajrapushpa, Vajragita, Jayapushpa, Jayaprabha Ratnadakini, Ratnavandana, Ratnasuri, Punyavati, Padmavati, Parami, Vimala, Samata, Sobhana, Anoma, Srimala, Mallika, Marichi, Gunavati, Bodhisri.

S: First come some Dharma questions, actually there are only three Dharma questions, the rest are about other subjects. The first one is about study. 'Do you have any suggestion as to how to formulate questions on a text so that it gives new dimensions to the study?'

There is no, as it were, special technique here. I think what is important is that one should think. That one should be actually interested in the questions discussed in the text. They should be questions that concern you quite independently of your actual study of the text. That is to say, they are not questions that you think about just when you are studying the text and as soon as the study time is finished you promptly forget all about that particular subject. You have got, as it were, to carry that subject, that topic, in your mind and it has got to engage your interest to such an extent that you actually think about it. You are interested in thinking about it, you are interested in understanding it, interested in fathoming it. If that happens questions will arise from, so to speak, a deeper level, out of that deeper interest. I think that is the main point. (Pause) So I think when you actually study a text you should try to relate what you study to these deeper interests that you have developed as a result

WOQ/A 85 1 - 2 2

of your thinking. It occurs to me that in a way this is analogous to meditation, in a way it is analogous to the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness is not something that is to be confined to the shrine room, mindfulness is not something that you practice for forty or fifty minutes each morning. Mindfulness is something that you try to carry through all of the day. So in the same way, it isn't that you are concerned about the nature of Sunyata just every Thursday evening for an hour and a half, or whatever it may be. It should be something that you are

interested in anyway, that you are thinking about. So that when you do come to study a text, you see the subject matter of the text in a much broader context, within the context of your own broader and deeper, more genuine, more comprehensive, as it were, philosophical interests in the Dharma. Do you see what I am getting at? But I think this is really the answer to the question. There is no technique, no special method. You have just got to cultivate that deeper, more general interest in the more fundamental topics that are dealt with in the texts. that one studies.

'Could you kindly suggest any books one could read which place the following Mahayana works in the cultural or in the historical contexts from which they sprang. The Vimala Kirti Nirdeśa, Sutra of Golden Light, Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, The Tibetan Book of the Dead?'

S I am afraid there are no such books. There is a reason for that, Indian history is full of gaps, very often it seems as though Indian history consists of gaps. We know so little, in detail, about Indian history, so little about the history of Indian Buddhism. This was borne on me recently, for instance, everybody knows that I gave a talk in Tuscany last year, called 'St. Jerome Revisited'. I was following up that little line of interest, recently, and I got hold of a volume of select letters of St. Jerome and also a life of St. Jerome and it was really astonishing the amount of information that we have about St. Jerome. We can follow his life sometimes day by day. Because he wrote so many letters that have survived. We know him very, very well indeed, from first hand literary sources, it's probably hardly an exaggeration to say that we know St. Jerome from his own writings and the writings of other people, as well as we know someone like Dr. Johnson. Even though he lived roughly three hundred A.D., that's more than sixteen hundred years ago. What is interesting is, an almost exact contemporary of St. Jerome is Nagarjuna. But what do we know about Nagarjuna? Nothing. We know the exact dates, the very exact date, the day of the month on which St. Jerome did this or wrote that or spoke to somebody, or started on a journey, or arrived somewhere, or visited a certain church. But we don't have anything like that with regard to Nagarjuna. We have got one or two epistles which are attributed to him, but they don't tell us anything about Nagarjuna. We have absolutely no information of that sort about Nagarjuna. So in the case of India, and Indian Buddhism, very often we have got these wonderful works but they seem to float in the void. We don't have the actual historical and cultural context. I am sure this, to some extent, hinders and hampers our understanding of them. The Indians, with the exception of the Buddhists, Indian Buddhists to some extent, were remarkably ahistorically minded. They didn't seem to have any interest in history. The Chinese did, so that when Buddhism goes to China we have a very full and detailed record, in many respects, of the history and progress of Chinese Buddhism j~ a way that we don't

w~Q/A 85 1 - 3      3

have for Indian Buddhism. Similarly for Tibetan Buddhism, the Tibetans too were great historians, though not to the extent of people in Europe. So unfortunately, there are no books which can give us the cultural, historical, and spiritual setting of these works. Sometimes we are not even sure exactly when they arose. I go through these things, to some extent, in my book on the Canonical literature. There are one or two partial exceptions. There is a book by Lal Mani Joshi I can't quite remember its title but it is on the period covered roughly by Shantideva, or of which Shanti-deva is the centre. That is to say, roughly

seventh, eight, ninth century A.D. Do you remember the title? It's something culture.

V: It's something like, pre....., I can't remember now.

S: It's the something culture of India, isn't it. Not \*\* pre-Buddhist of course. But anyway I have got it in the Order Library, I read it some time ago, it is a fairly new book. It is very, very readable. It does fill you in very well indeed, better than any other book on the cultural and historical back- ground of that particular period, when Shantideva was flourishing and Nalanda University was flourishing. But it is subsequent to, by several hundred years, the period when these Mahayana sutras arose, certainly the first three. The Saddharma Pundarika is in a separate category. So I suggest that if anyone is interested in exploring the cultural background, the cultural and historical background of late Mahayana, in India, they should read this book, which is very readable. It is very well written and very interesting, and full of information. So I would like to see this book stocked.

Jayaprabha: I have ordered some from India.

S: As well as his later work on the Buddha, called Discerning Thhe Buddha.

Jayaprabha: That's the other one I've....

S: These are very good books indeed, and as I have said, very readable.

V: What did you say his name was?

S: Lal Mani Joshi, he is an Indian scholar. Unfortunately he died just some months ago, but he was in touch with us, he was a great admirer of the FWBO. He was an Indian, a Punjabi, who taught in a University in the Punjab and a Unive- rsity in America. A very fine Sanskrit scholar, Brahmin by birth but completely converted to Buddhism and in contact with us. Has written to us several times, written to me several times, but as I say, unfortunately, he died, he was only fifty six or fifty seven. He produced these two excellent books, which I think we should regularly stock, I think you should read if you possibly can.

\*\* Studies in the Buddhist~Culture of India

WOQ/A 85 1 - 4 4

Alright, here's a poser:- 'Can you please define intuition? What is the place of intuition in relation to ones spiritual development?'

Intuition~is a word I try to avoid using, have you noticed that? I use imagination, I use insight, I hardly ever use the word intuition. So in a way I don't feel too happy with this question. Intuition is used very loosely, this is ones of the reasons I avoid it, but where it is defined at all clearly, it is usually defined as a direct understanding, -an immediate understanding of something, or perception of something, which doesn't go through any logical process. Do you see what I mean? So it has, in that respect, a ~imilarity to insight but often it is used just for a sort of feeling, or a hunch, or even a prejudice. So it isn't really a very satisfactory word. But where it does have a definite meaning it is more of the nature of a

direct perception, a direct understanding of something, rather than a perception or understanding which is mediated by a logical, step by step process of thought. So what is the place of intuition in relation to one's spiritual development? Well again it depends how you define it, but to the extent that it is akin to insight, well obviously the more spiritually developed you become the more you will come to rely upon intuition and less on purely logical process. I think one has to be very careful not to claim as intuition what are purely emotional reactions or hunches or prejudices or instincts, or something of that sort. Sometimes it is not a question of true intuition, but simply quickness of thought, and that is a different thing. But on the whole it is not a satisfactory word, I prefer to avoid it.

'Why do we incorporate and conclude with mantras in the Seven Fold Puja? From what sources do they come?'

S: This obviously goes back right to the beginnings of the movement, even before, because I compiled this Seven Fold Puja when I was at the Hampstead Vihara, I introduced it there before the FWBO was even started. I thought of the Seven Fold Puja as something which included elements of the Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. It was in a way a Triyana Puja, though technically, yes, it is a Mahayana Puja, it's the Seven Fold Puja, but even the Mahayana Seven Fold Puja incorporates elements from the Hinayana as I have explained in the Survey. But I added on the mantras to suggest a sort of Vajrayana touch, do you see what I mean? But also, not just for the sake of having all three Yanas represented but because the Seven Fold Puja, the recitation of the Seven Fold Puja is one of the ways of developing the Bodhicitta, isn't it, or encouraging the Bodhicitta to arise. So it is very much connected with the development of the Bodhisattva ideal, and the mantras, most of them, are connected with the Bodhisattvas. So the mantras represent those spiritual forces or spiritual realities with which we seem to come into contact through your practice of the Seven Fold Puja, through your recitation of the Seven Fold Puja and through your Going for Refuge and your development of the Bodhicitta and so on. So I felt that the recitation of those mantras, sort of, lifted the whole Puja to a somewhat higher level, especially as after that there was just silence. This was the original reason. From what sources do they come? Well, that is difficult to say,

WOQ/A 85 1 - 5      5

the sources from which they come are the sources from which the individual mantras come, we don't always know that. For instance in the case of the Om Mani Padme Hum, the canonical source seems to be a Tibetan work called the Mani Khabum. Is it Mani Khabum?, yes it is. I think also in Sanskrit the work called the Karuna Pundarika Sutra, the sutra of the White Lotus of Compassion. So there are canonical sources for some of them at least. But some just occur in so many Saddhanas and ... texts and sutras that it is difficult to say that any one is the source, as it were, they are so widespread. Another question, following on this same point:-

'There seems to be another version of Shakyamuni's mantra, i.e. Om muni muni mahamuni ye svaha, which is chanted by some Tibetan monks. Is there such a thing as the correct mantra?'

S: Yes, very often there is, because Tibetans and Chinese often mispronounce Sanskrit

mantras. For instance Tibetans never say 'Tare Tuttare', they say, 'Tare Tittare', which is actually quite wrong. It is definitely tuttare and it is spelt as such, but they pronounce it tittare. In the same way they say not, 'Om mani padme hum', but 'pene hum'. So there are mispronunciations and one does not have to necessarily follow those mispronunciations. In the case of the Mahamuni ye, that is not -- mispronunciation because some texts do give that. The reason is that Sanskrit, as you probably know, like Pali, is an inflected language. Do you know what that means? It means that nouns have terminations, they don't have separate words for what those terminations signify as in English. They don't have prepositions and so on, they have these terminations. Let me give you an example. We say, 'to the Buddha', in Sanskrit it is 'Buddhasa', there is a termination, 'asa', which indicates it is to the Buddha. Or for 'by the Buddha', 'Buddhana', or 'of the Buddha', 'Buddhanum'. (?) This is called an inflection, so the ye is an inflection, muniye means 'to the muni', but to the muni what? So when a name is incorporated into a mantra the inflections, to the mahamuni or to Amitabha tend to be dropped, so in that you just get the bare name. Which in a way seems more suitable when you are, in a way, invoking the particular Buddha or Bodhisattva. So in a way, 'Muni muni maha muni ye svaha', is more correct, because the inflection is there, but it isn't really necessary, because there is nothing following, say, to the muni we offer, so in mantras this usually is dropped. So for the sake of consistency with the other mantras we drop this. One mantra, of course, where there is an inflection is the Om mani padme hum, because 'padme' means 'in the lotus', which is the vocative case, so there is an inflection, but that is invariably retained, we never have, as far as I know Om mane padma hum, it is always padme hum. So there is a slight inconsistency. But otherwise, well that wasn't originally a name anyway, that's another story. But generally the mantra includes the uninflected name of the Bodhisattva or Buddha. Is that clear?

WOQ/A 85 1 - 6      6

Right, questions on the unity of the Order, there are three on that.

I have heard from other Order Members that they have received feedback indirectly from you via another Order Member and they wonder how seriously it is taken. I wonder for the sake of personal growth, and the growth of the Movement if feedback from you could be more direct. Do you think that Order Members resist feedback from you?

S: It is not clear whether it means feedback from you directly or feedback whether direct or indirect, that isn't clear, but never mind. So, I have heard from other Order Members that they have received feedback indirectly from you, via another Order Member. Well this is certainly the case nowadays. This is just because it is difficult for me to speak to everybody personally. Probably that in some cases, if not in most cases would be desirable, it just isn't possible. So there are a lot of instances where I give feedback through, usually through people like Subhuti or Kovida who are in close contact with me. Especially when it has to be done over the telephone. For instance, recently this whole business of, in the first place the Mahadharmavira, Lokamitra phoned about that. I dealt with that entirely through Subhuti, Lokamitra asked for certain information, certain feedback, so I gave it through Subhuti. Ditto when this whole question of people going to America arose the question arose of Manjuvajra acquiring, or the FWBO acquiring this retreat centre. I didn't exchange a single word with Manjuvajra about that, I did it all through Subhuti. Because I was deeply involved in my literary work and if I just have to deal with Subhuti it is much less of an interruption than

dealing personally with five or six other people. So more recently, especially when I have been getting on with my writing, I have been giving feedback or responding to people's enquiries much more through those Order Members who are closely connected with me at Padmaloka. This probably will continue, especially when I am engaged in literary work. And also, of course, Subhuti has been replying to letters on my behalf after consulting with me. Kovida likewise and Dharmadara likewise and I think Sridevi is going on to take on some of this responsibility too, after she moves to Norwich. Because I can often deal, or I can often dispose of letters much more quickly in this way if I give Subhuti just a hint as to what I feel and he relays that. He is quite experienced working in that way with me and can always express what I have said to him quite accurately. Apart from that there are sometimes more serious personal matters that I have dealt with indirectly where I have felt that a letter wasn't appropriate, but I have dealt with it indirectly through Subhuti who has seen or who has interviewed or phoned the person concerned. Sometimes I have not wanted a letter written, even by Subhuti, because there was something that I wanted to make quite sure was conveyed and really was put across with exactly the right emphasis. I know I can rely upon Subhuti to do that. So sometimes this also does happen, I ask Subhuti to discuss a particular topic with somebody and to see that a particular point of view, that is to say that my point of view is conveyed in the course of that discussion in a quite clear and unmistakable way. So yes, these days, especially this last six or eight months I am tending to function rather more in this way

WOQ/A 85 1 - 7      7

than previously. In the sort of instances I've mentioned, what is communicated, what is conveyed, I am quite sure is taken no less seriously because it comes through Subhuti or through Kovida. I have no reason to think that things that I have communicated in that way haven't been taken seriously. But the question is, 'I wonder if for the sake of personal growth and the growth of the movement if feedback from you could be more direct'. If it is a question of growth of the Movement, I think, the growth of the Movement almost depends upon my functioning to some extent in this indirect way because I can't function always directly. Sometimes another thing that happens is, somebody asks me for my opinion about some matter affecting, or partly affecting a third party and I say what I think, then that other person comes to hear that Bhante has said so and so. Then they say, 'why did Bhante not tell me directly?' but I think sometimes there is a misunderstanding, people think as though I have suddenly taken it into my head to make that statement, whereas that is never the case. I make that statement, sometimes, when I am asked a certain question or when it comes up quite incidentally. Not that I have, as it were, gone out of my way to make that particular statement about that particular person, who happens not to be present. Sometimes it is quite impossible after every conversation to say, 'Oh I mentioned so and so, you had better write and tell them what I said.' Sometimes it is quite trivial anyway, but sometimes people become quite uneasy, even Order Members, though this is more in the case of Mitras, but even Order Members, when they hear that Bhante has passed some comment on them. Not always realising it is completely incidental and in response to somebody's query or enquiry. Do you see what I mean? 'Do you think Order Members resist feedback from you?' I think sometimes they do, sometimes. But not just because it has been mediated through Subhuti or Kovida. Sometimes they resist it when I put it to them quite directly myself. Anyway, does anyone want to follow that up with anything supplementary? Because it is quite an important point, a quite important question. Or is it sufficiently clear? If people are not quite sure what I have said, or whether I have in fact said something about

them, if they think it is sufficiently important it is always open to them just to write and ask me. Perhaps also here this question of trust arises. It is this that I am going to be raising in a different sort of way a bit later on.

Srimala: I suppose sometimes, my question, but you might say an Order Member, well say myself, I have come to see you and in conversation we might be talking about somebody else and I don't know at the end whether..., you might have said something about another Order Member, should I actually convey that to the person. I don't ask you at the time and I am not quite sure whether I should.

S: Well my general principle is that I don't mind anything being conveyed, because I don't like to feel that something I have said about another person in their absence is not meant to be heard by them. If I have any sort of doubt I will say to them 'be careful how you put this to so and so,' especially if it is Mitra and it is maybe some feedback about their readiness for ordination. I will express myself, perhaps frankly to the Order Member but perhaps one should be quite careful how you convey that in turn to the Mitra concerned. Not suddenly bounce

WOQ/A 85 1 - 8      8

in one day and say 'oh Bhante says so and so about you'. Sometimes that does happen. You see, I can talk frankly about, for instance that Mitra's readiness for Ordination, but they shouldn't necessarily put it across to the Mitra with the same degree of abruptness. I ... think it proper to feed that to them bit by bit, maybe over a period of a couple of weeks. I tell it to you, as an Order member, just within two or three minutes. Maybe I feel I can speak frankly to you and also we don't have much time, and there is no need also to drag it out, but that same information, that same feedback regarding the Mitra may need to be fed to the Mitra much more carefully than I needed to tell it to you. So one should bear that in mind, because sometimes, I have found people, Order Members especially have been quite insensitive in this sort of way, and have conveyed my feelings about the Mitra with the same bluntness that I have actually spoken to the Order Member about the Mitra, which is not always appropriate. But as a general principle, I don't like to feel that anything I say can't be repeated to certain people, especially when it is about them. One couldn't possibly keep track of all these things anyway, so it is best to take it that whatever one says; I always take it that whatever I say may be repeated. But I think one has a very great responsibility to repeat accurately, and also in the proper context or indicating the context. For instance, just to give you an example, I'll invent an example. You bounce in and you say, 'Bhante says he thinks you ought to go to America.' So the way that is conveyed is that it suggests, that Bhante, took the speaker, who is conveying that message, aside and said 'I think so-and-so should go to America'. But what actually has happened would be, someone comes to see me and we are talking about people going to America and the person who comes to see me says, 'do you think so-and-so should go to America'. So I say, 'well I don't really know' and they say, 'don't you think he should, maybe, he could do?' So I say, 'well perhaps he could, maybe'. They say, 'he could go, he is quite suitable, he could go couldn't he?', so I say 'yes I suppose he could.' Then they bounce in and say, 'Bhante says you ought to go to America.' This often happens I am afraid, some statement that has been extracted from me being

represented as originating with me in a vol untary statement completely in the void, as it were, as though it was something I dAA~nitel thought and -ydefinitel wanted to say and ~nitel wanted communicated to that other absent person. This quite often happens. Also, to give another small instance, this used to happen sometimes at Padmaloka. People don't reproduce the way I speak and sometimes that is quite important. Sometimes I have said to an Order Member, just go and see if that Mitra is doing anything, if he isn't busy ask him if he would mind coming to see me for a minute. So the Order member goes off, 'Oi, Bhante wants you!' (laughter) which is quite different. It's more with the men than with the women, but it misrepresents my meaning, what I have said. So one should be very careful, not only with me but with other Order Members and with anybody. If you reproduce what they say be very careful to really reproduce it properly, with even the intonation. Well certainly if they have said something politely, not put it in a blunt, rude way, which completely distorts the meaning and perhaps gives a wrong impression of what I have said and how I have said it, and so on. I really appreciated the Tibetans in this way, perhaps because they are more used to carrying verbal messages, you could absolutely rely on them. Even if you..., I used to send long messages to Dhardo Rimpoche through my manager, I could absolutely rely on

WOQ/A 85 1 - 9 9

him to reproduce exactly what I said, not only every word but the exact degree of emphasis and politeness and so on. But I have often felt badly let down by Order Members in this respect. Anyway, is that enough about that?

'How far should one put aside one's desire for a sexual relationship in the interests of the stability and unity of the Order?'

S: It's very difficult to say, because who is this 'one (laughter) Is it some hot blooded young male Order Member or is it some rather elderly lady Order Member. Because the answer might differ in these different cases. (laughter) But, no. I find it very difficult to generalise. I would say though, that if one does find that the fact that one has or is involved in, or would like to be involved in, a sexual relationship, is going to effect the interests of the stability or unity, well, one should at least consider that very, very seriously. At least one can expect that of people, that they will be responsible in this area of their lives, as in others. But I find it quite impossible to lay down any sort of hard and fast rule. How important is the sexual relationship to them, is it neurotic, is it non-neurotic, how old are they, are they mature, are they just entering upon life, are they comparatively young? In what ~ is the stability and unity of the Order threatened potentially by their sexual relationship? But at least, certainly in this respect an Order Member will give very serious consideration to this aspect of the question and consult their spiritual friends. Don't just come to a decision entirely by yourself. I am a bit disappointed sometimes when people do that, when they enter into relationships, sometimes perhaps with far reaching consequences, but without consulting their spiritual friends. Again the question of trust comes in It is not only, perhaps, a question of the interests of the stability and unity of the Order, but the success of your centre. I know for instance in one particular centre that the men Order Members, there were no women Order Members in that centre, after discussion came to an agreement they would not enter a sexual relationship with any woman who came to the centre, coming obviously with a definite spiritual interest. They felt it would complicate things for her, so they decided that if they did have any sexi~l relationship with a woman it would be with

someone outside the centre, outside the movement, not with someone who was coming to their classes. I did think this was very sensible and it showed that they appreciated this aspect of things.

Questions on Women Order Members, centres and Co-ops.

'Do you see the LBC as being a good situation for new or younger women Order Members trying to gain confidence in leading classes etc? Or alternatively a smaller situation, perhaps completely new, where the women Order Members would have to fall back on themselves for inspiration.'

S: So this begins by being more a question about the LBC. Whether it is a good situation for new, or younger women Order Members trying to gain confidence in leading classes, or alternatively a smaller situation? I suppose it varies very much with the individual. Again, some people feel more confident in the smaller situation, say leading in the smaller situation, but others not. Others feel more confident in the bigger situation, because in the smaller situation you are much more aware of the

WOQ/A 85 1 - 10 10

people in that particular group, or the people in your audience as individuals. And you can feel that as more threatening, and therefore find it more difficult to be confident in that situation. Whereas if you have got a larger group, sometimes they seem more like an impersonal sort of mass and you don't feel so threatened by them. Do you see what I mean? And then feel more confident when you have got a large audience than when you have got a very small, intimate one. So I think one would need to look at the individual, new woman Order Member. It may be that some will find it more easy to gain confidence leading small groups, others may find it more easy to gain confidence leading large groups. Others may not mind very much either way. I think around the LBC there are probably opportunities for leading smaller groups and opportunities for leading larger groups. So probably it is quite a good situation in that sort of way, or from that point of view. But of course perhaps one thing that could be said is that I think the new, or younger Order Member whether male or female should certainly think to begin with in terms of supporting rather than leading. (end side 1) I think it is quite important to have a period of supporting if that is at all possible, if the number of Order Members around permits. Because obviously that will induct you into the situation in an easier sort of way. Anyone have any comment from their own personal experience? Or did you all tend to be thrown in at the deep end ... (V: Yes)

Jayaprabha: That was my question. I found the Wednesday nights, just when I have been doing that, quite useful, because Jayamati has been training us. He has been allowing us to give talks and actually been giving us a lot of feedback. (S: Good) I do actually find the prospect of, say, a regulars night at the LBC quite daunting because the talks are of such a high standard and people are very good at what they do. So it seems like quite a gulf to bridge.

S: Yes, it's not only a question of confidence but also a question of knowledge, because if

you~don't have the requisite knowledge, well, you shouldn't be confident. That would mean you would just be trying to bluff your way through the situation, or ride on your personal charisma, which is not at all a good thing to do. You can have too much confidence as well as too little.

Parami: I think that that will vary from individual to individual as well, because some people find it easier to go into a regular situation where the responsibility doesn't seem so huge, in a way. Whereas the responsibility of having completely new people, their first approach to the Dharma.

S: Yes, it's unlikely that your talk will upset a regular. Tho the extent that he or she would never come again, whereas that could happen with a complete newcomer. It could happen even with the best of intentions, because there might be some- thing in them or some possibility of reaction on their part that you could not possibly have foreseen.

Jayaprabha: It is very difficult when you do have, say, sixty at a beginners class.

WOQ/A 85 1 - 11 11

S: Yes, you are almost bound to tread on somebody's toes.

Jayaprabha: Yes, but you also don't know of the reaction, often, to what you have said.

S: Yes, and you can't go too cautiously otherwise your talk will just lack impetus or lack bite. It will be so anaemic that no-one will really appreciate it or enjoy it.

Parami: Everybody leaves! (laughter)

S: But, perhaps there should be an opportunity at the end of the talk, or whatever, for people to ask questions and then hopefully you could put right anything of that sort.

Jayaprabha: We do have that now.

S: Or at least there could be other Order Members around that they could talk to and it could be made clear that they should talk to other Order Members around and clear up any difficulties. Sometimes quite inadvertently you step on somebody's tender corns.

'If two or three women Order members were to go off and start a centre somewhere, where would you like to see them go? What advice would you give them?'

S: I must say I haven't really thought about this, because I know that the women Order Members are in such great demand around the existing centres that I hadn't really thought in terms of two or three (as we notice) going off to set up a centre somewhere. I really don't know. I don't know whether I should indulge my imagination or whether I should restrain it because it is unrealistic at the present moment. In some ways I don't mind. Perhaps if I was forced to (laughter) I would probably say the North, the North of England.

Parami: Scotland

S: No, not Scotland because the question is to start a centre, Vam answering the question. (laughter)

Parami: Scotland is a big country!

S: I think the North of England, because there is a big gap on the map, as regards the FWBO when it comes to the Midlands and the North of England, and I think it is an excellent area. So, yes, I would say the North of England. 'What advice would you give them?' Well that would depend on the women themselves. Who they were, I would give one type of advice, perhaps, to some women and another type of advice to others. Perhaps I need not go into details, it would be quite hypothetical anyway at the moment. It would be quite interesting, actually, to see two or three women Order Members going off and starting a centre somewhere. I don't see why they shouldn't because one woman Order Member started up something in Holland and another in Malaysia, so two or three should be able to do something in the North of England(

WOQ/A 85 1 - 12 12

'Cooperative businesses really need the most committed people, i.e. Order Members to make up the majority of a team in order to be an expression of true right livelihood.'

S: Yes, I think I~would agree with that.

- 'Looking at women's businesses in the FWBO this is not the case. Is this why more women have not been ordained directly as a result of working full time in a co-operative situation?'

S: I think that is quite difficult to say, because some women have been ordained who, not only have not worked in a co-operative situation but who have not been in a position to do so, just on account of family commitments. But the family commitments have not stopped them getting ordained. You could even say that running a family is a bit like working in a Co-op. Well, you do have responsibilities, and that is the key to the whole thing, in a way. You don't perhaps have the contact with other committed people, especially if you are a woman on your own with small children and perhaps not if you are the sole parent, as it were. But I think that it is no 'accident' that quite a few women, married and with families have got ordained. Because I think it does bring out certain qualities of responsibility and so forth which are necessary ingredients of the true individual. But yes, I think the co-operative situation is a very, very positive one. I think we really do need to have more Order Members working in co-ops, whether of men or of women. It is really not fair, almost, to have Mitras working in co-ops without a sufficient number of Order Members. Because it is a very demanding situation. It is also a very positive situation, a very crucial situation, a situation which all sorts of things can happen in. In which, really, growth can take place. But I think it takes place within the co-operative situation to the extent that within that situation contact with Order Members, real effective contact is available. Even without the presence of Order Members, working in a co-op or working in a right livelihood situation will have some value. However I don't think it will have nearly as much value without Order Members working in that sort of situation as with. So I think women Order Members in particular, ought to ask

themselves very seriously whether they could make a better overall or longterm contribution to the movement, and help to get women Mitras more quickly ready for ordination, by working with them in a co-op or not. Let's go on to the second part of this question.

I have sometimes wondered about forgetting large right livelihood businesses, e.g. Cherry Orchard, until such time as sufficient women Order Members could come together in them. But instead work more through communities.'

S: I'm not sure about that. I don't think just the community is a sufficiently demanding or challenging situation. I don't think we have any instance, to the best of my knowledge or recollection, of a community in which Order Members and Mitras are living and in which there is no element of right livelihood. For instance at Padmaloka the right livelihood is not just the candle business but the running of, that particular wing of Padmaloka, as a retreat centre, which is quite demanding and

WOQ/A 85 1 - 13 13

entails quite a lot of hard work. To speak of the building, ... work in the garden and all that sort of thing.

Samata: Actually that was my question, Bhante, and what I had in mind were women who were, say, studying something like osteopathy or herbalism, who live together. So they are following..., they are not working in a co-op, but they are following an interest, becoming qualified in that but having strong contact in the community.

S: Yes, I think someone who is following, say, an osteopathic course, or something like that, is obviously following something which is very demanding. It is akin, in some respects, to the co-op situation, inasmuch as it is demanding, but, of course, in that situation itself, in which they are learning osteopathy they are cut off from the Sangha, most likely. So obviously they will rely for their Sangha contact on the community. So it could be argued that a woman Order Member who is living in a community with women Mitras who were not just, as it were, drifting around, but who are committed to a particular course of study, could be fulfilling a useful function. Keeping them in touch things and giving them a spiritual fellowship. I know several instances where, both with regard to men and women, some of these courses, whether osteopathy or acupuncture or allopathy for that matter can be very, very demanding. And you have to consider first of all your reasons for taking them up, but supposing you do decide to take them up, well you don't have much time, very often, you are quite tired at the end of the day and you need your Sangha contact, as it were, right there on the spot in your community, if you are living in a community. So there is an argument, therefore, for gathering three or four of these sort of women together in a community, presuming that they are Mitras and have taken up those courses of study with positive motives, and having a resident Order Member to look after them and give them the spiritual contact that they need. In fact that could be, potentially, as fruitful a situation, or as good a way as using one's time for the Movement, as working in a co-op with Mitras. But not just working through any old community, as it were. If you see what I mean.

Samata: I suppose also I wonder if there are other forms of work that women..., as yet we don't have incorporated in the Movement. That women find gives them a sense of self

confidence through that and that that is helping

S: I think all work gives one a feeling of self confidence. But there are some works that are more in accordance with right livelihood and spiritual life than others. Someone was talking about the possibility of women, presumably women Order Members and Mitras starting up a decorating business. That isn't impossible I'm sure. One just has to, perhaps, be a bit adventurous, a bit sensible also, and explore fresh ground. Just a general point, my own impression is from what I know of co-ops within the Movement so far, that the biggest weakness has been lack of managerial skills. People often work very, very hard but the co-op doesn't make much money, mainly, in several cases, due to the lack of managerial skills. So I think that is a very important point, it's not just enough to get the workers together and give them the spiritual contact but you need to have at least

WOQ/A 85 1 - 14 14

one person in your co-op who knows how to go about managing things, who knows how to get orders where you depend on orders, or who knows how to run a profitable business. Otherwise you will be working very, very hard and, yes, very likely getting good spiritual contact, but the co-op isn't making~n~hing, or it might even be getting into debt.

Samata: Do you see..., if say hypothetically, there was a possibility of a business having a manager like that who wasn't say as yet involved or interested in the Friends, do you see a possibility of working with somebody like that?

S: I think that is a rather dicey situation. Because they may lose sight of the other objectives, or the whole thing would be dependent for its success on someone who wasn't spiritually involved or spiritually committed. He or she could just pull out and go off on a whim at any moment because they didn't have any sense of spiritual responsibility, or any sense of loyalty to the Movement. Or they might join some quite different group and want you to work for that, which you wouldn't be willing to do. Anything further about that point or is that clear, is that sufficiently discussed? I think really the co-op situation, ideally, offers an excellent situation for Mitras, for their personal development and even preparation for ordination. But the presence of Order Members within the co-op, not just one or two but substantial numbers relative to the number of Mitras, is really quite indispensable. So I think women Order Members, as well as men Order Members should give very serious consideration to this, whether their energies should be put in that particular direction.

V: Would you recommend that people did businesses management courses?

S: In some cases yes, I think some are, or some have done Thhat.

V: Because you haven't always got that experience from your own

S: Yes. There are all sorts of courses that people can take nowadays and I think we should look at these very, very seriously in relation to our own needs and the needs of the Movement. There are all sorts of courses, business management, accountancy, auditing,

dozens, hundreds of them.

Parami: Maybe the problem seems to be that people get caught up in short term objectives and they can't take the time for something like a managerial course which might have longer term benefits. I think we need more long term planning, actually.

S: I think in the case of very young Order Members you can't expect them to take too long a view of things too soon. I think they need to shop around a bit within the Movement.

Parami: Do you mean young as newly ordained?

S: Yes, I mean newly ordained. To find their feet within The movement, to decide what is going to be their main, or ma~or contribution within the Movement extending over a number

WOQ/A 85 1 - 15 15

of years. You can't expect them really to make up their minds immediately, sometimes they may but sometimes it may take them three or four years, or even more, to do that. I think that by the time an Order Member is, say, thirty, presuming that they have been ordained three or four years, or five years, they should have made up their mind what is going to be their major contribution within the Movement. Then they should go about qualifying themselves for that. If, for instance, by the time you are thirty you decide you are really interested in finances, you are quite happy to be managing finances within the Movement, maybe as treasurer to a co-op or treasurer to a centre, well you should then ask yourself whether you are sufficiently qualified. If you are thinking of being involved in that way for the next ten or twelve years, well it is only sensible to spend six months qualifying yourself through a proper course. People who have gone on some of these courses have sometimes been suprised how much they learn, and how much there was to learn. And how much easier it made it for them when they had some sort of professional expertise at their fingertips. It is possible to learn, perhaps one needs to have that sort of confidence. Things that you don't know you can learn. If you don't know French you can learn French, if you don't elementary book keeping you can learn it. If you don't know how to operate a computer you can learn it, believe it or not, even I could. If you don't know how to type you can learn typing. I think perhaps people need to convince themselves that subjects that they don't know can be learned. There are ways of learning and it isn't difficult if you just go step by step. Go on a proper course. I think people are beginning to realise this within the Movement, but it is dawning on them rather slowly.

'At this ~oint in time would you advise women Order Members to move to centres without an existing woman Order Member or should we concentrate on intensifying the situations we are already in, i.e. within right livelihood and speeding up the ordination process?'

S: I really find it quite difficult to say. I think what V would really like to see is that Women's retreat centre in the country functioning first, with two or three or four women

Order Members in residence and then we shall see. Because if we have that, well then women can come for longer or shorter periods from all over the movement, not only all over the country but all over the world, wherever there is the FWBO. So I really think that is the next step, I think we can consider other steps after that. I think probably that is the priority at the moment, in this country. And I think we need some of your best women there, at least one or two of them. Who is going at the moment, just for the sake of (laughter covers the names) Who else? You two heroines, good. What is the latest news?

Sanghadevi: I'm making some

S: But what is your expectation. Moving within six months?

Sanghadevi: I am still aiming at September, well, the beginning of October.

S: Good.

WOQ/A 85 1 - 16 16

S: Questions on women, and women Order Members confidence, Thdependence, holding each other back.

'Generally speaking it seems to me that a females early conditioning is to protect herself against physical violence, the worst being rape. This has led to women staying in a protected environment, not being really adventurous, maybe even needing a man to protect her. This leads to a deep seated sense of vulnerability, anxiety, fear and lack of self confidence. The self protectiveness operates on subconscious as well as conscious levels so that even their egos are not exposed for such modifications as ~-n's Because all this starts so early in life many women are not sufficiently aware of the strength and impact of this conditioning. I think this is something that women have to come to terms with before they can step out to be ordained, what do you think?'

S: Do you all agree on this analysis, to begin with? That generally speaking a females earlier conditioning is to protect herself against physical violence, the worst being rape, and this had led to her staying in a protected environment and not being very adventurous? Is there general agreement about this, broadly speaking? Obviously there will always be exceptions, but broadly speaking?

V's Well there's something in it. Well there is.

Parami: I think what it is, that often little girls are told they have to not go in certain places and not do certain things that perhaps little boys aren't told in the same way.

S: But little boys are sometimes told.

Parami: Yes, but

V: (Indistinct)

S: Well attacks are usually on women, rather than men.

Vajrasuri: There is no doubt it child rearing, little girls are advised to behave modestly, not to attract attention to themselves.

S: But is this to protect herself against physical violence?

Vajrasuri: Well there is an implication that, 'don't speak to strangers, don't have anything to do with men, walk home directly after school. It is all implied, it is not said,~~physical violence, but it is all implied that something unpleasant will happen to you if you don't behave well.

S: Or behave cautiously.

Vajrasuri: You behave cautiously, pull your skirt down over your knees,' and you go to protect this very vulnerable body, apparently, that you've got somehow. And little boys don't have that kind of conditioning. To that extent, of course some little girls don't have, but across the board it's something that little girls experience, that they have to guard something,

WOQ/A 85 1 - 17 17

protect something. They don't know what it is, but they do have that fear for it and so I think that they develop, through the years this kind of cautiousness, this kind of insecurity and just not really knowing what it is actually all about. So it becomes quite ingrained and there is no clear access to it. I think it can build up in some cases, a lack of confidence and still a lack of clarity as to what that lack of confidence is about.

S: There does seem to be a sort of consensus and certainly This has been the conclusion that I have come to over the years, certainly with regard to the women that I encounter within the Movement on various levels; whether Order Members, Mitras or Friends. That they are very often lacking in self confidence, whether it is tied up with this or not I can't be completely sure. Though it seems to me quite reasonable that it should be, that this should be an explanation, at least to some extent. But there is, I think, this relative lack of confidence and certainly it has its bearing on the question of ordination because one needs to.., one cannot go for refuge without confidence in oneself. This doesn't mean that one isn't sometimes aware that one is vulnerable in certain respects and takes objective precautions. For instance, there are some parts of London or maybe certain parts of New York that I wouldn't wander about in in the dark because I think I would very likely get mugged because I would be seen as a frail, elderly man and it would be foolish to wander about under those circumstances. That wouldn't mean I was lacking in self confidence in a psychological sense. So I think a woman can take reasonable precautions, acknowledging the fact that she is a woman, but at the same time, despite that, develop self confidence. Because if you weren't to

take those reasonable precautions, whether as man or as woman, it wouldn't show self confidence, it would just show foolhardiness which is a quite different thing. But yes, I think this question of self confidence in women is quite important. I see this within the context of the Movement more and more clearly every year.

Vajrasuri: I think it is an inhibiting factor and I also think that with some women it's a part, it's a part of an aspect of them actually not accepting themselves as women. Actually not accepting that they do feel vulnerable.

S: Or even that in a certain sense a woman ~s vulnerable. You can't get away from that. You have to accept the objective that you are. Just as, for instance, I have to accept that as an elderly man I am in certain respects more vulnerable than a young man because I couldn't, perhaps, defend myself in the same sort of way if I was attacked. I just have to accept that.

Vajrasuri: I think once you are aware you are quite strong then because you are quite sensible about things, but until awareness of this deeper level..., if there is an area of confusion and so therefore an area of emotional oscillation.

S: I think also because it isn't and can't be spelled out U the little girl what she is really got to be afraid of (Vajrasuri: No it can't) there is this sort of vague sense of dread. The vagueness, sometimes, is almost the worst part of it.

18

WOQ/A 85 1 - 18

Vajrasuri: I think that's it, yes.

S: Because it means that you are then almost afraid, you are Wot just afraid that a man may rape you, you are afraid of every- thing because you haven't been told exactly what it is that you are to be afraid of. And perhaps you can't at that tender age, you can't always understand. And something of this, in some woman at least, will linger on in after life.

Vajrasuri: They can become timid about everything, often not aware.

S: Though sometimes, one must be careful not to over~generalise, or generalise just from our own society and culture, one doesn't find it quite in the same way India. One doesn't find it., it is different on different social levels. It differs in India, I'm sure, from one caste to another, because in certain castes women are treated with such respect, particularly the higher caste women, that I don't think they have this sense of vulnerability. They are kept at home but it's not 'oh be careful when you go out', because they don't go out.

Padmasuri: Well they are not allowed out.

S: Yes, they are not allowed out. But I don't think they have That same sort of feeling of dread. It's kept much more positive I would say.

Vajrasuri: I had the feeling that they were confident as being women.

S: That's true, but perhaps that is another, bigger question.

Vajrasuri: I think a part of it can be attributed to this problem.

S: Yes, I would certainly broadly agree with what the questioner says here, though there will be acceptations of course. But certainly I have no doubt about this lack of confidence because I am coming up against it all the time within the Movement.

Sarvabadri: How could we guard, as being mothers of daughters, against this happening?

S: I think, you mean them developing this? (Sarvabadri: Yes) I think actually, as soon as you can, as soon as the girl is old enough to understand you have to be relatively frank and identify the danger more clearly. Say, 'well if you are just a bit sensible well nothing is going to happen to you, you don't have to worry about anything else. You don't have to worry about very much else'. Just warn them about it quite specifically in the same way that you warn them about being careful to look both ways before crossing the street. Not in an emotionally loaded sort of way, in a matter of fact way, if you possibly can. Until you can explain this in more detail you probably have to keep your daughters closer to you, or not allow them out too much, or only allow them out under proper guardianship.

Parami: But then that brings up a lack of self confidence, because there again the girl is not experiencing herself as

WOQ/A 85 1 - 19 19

being independent.

S: But it is the same with little boys, because you warn a little boy not to just rush across the street, to look both ways and so on, not to go too near the edge of the water and all that sort of thing. It is just one other item. Admittedly it is a particularly significant item, but I think, perhaps, one should try to warn against it in specific terms but in a matter of fact sort of way. So that the anxiety is not diffused over the whole of life. This is all I can think of at the moment. I think one has to recognise objectively that girls are in a quite different position from boys, and they can't, as it were, be treated equally. Not if equal means the same, only in an~ ideal society.

Padmasuri: When you meet people, say coming along to the centre, they turn up and they have obviously got this great lack of self confidence, or whatever past conditioning, what is the best way to deal with it?

S: It takes a long..., if it goes back a long way to childhood or any other early conditioning it takes a long time to ... How does a person build up self confidence generally? Mainly by discovering bit by bit that they can do things, I think you have to encourage them to do things, in a sense, in all sorts of ways, things that they thought before that they couldn't do. But I think there is an element of objective concern in this. I don't feel too happy sometimes when I hear of women going off on their own around India, because it isn't always safe. If the woman is sensible, well O.K., it's reasonably safe, but it is always a bit less safe, I think, for a woman than for a man in India. I think one just has to be sensible about that and accept the objective limitation in certain instances but without letting it affect one's basic, or

overall self confidence. But certainly this feeling of lack of self confidence, whether or not it is due~that particular conditioning is some- thing that women have to come to terms with before they can step out to be ordained.

V: It does sometime ~ se ~~~you can encourage someone to do things and develop thei~,so~someone can do quite a lot of things and be confident in t~em but they still seems to be a residue of..., maybe it's more existential lack of confidence. And I think there is a question on that.

S: What is self confidence, though if there is a question we'll come back to that.

Vajrasuri: It has got something to do with being brave enough to stay in touch with your vulnerability and awareness of it without expecting it to go away or distract yourself from it.

S: Hmm, well everybody is vulnerable in all sorts of ways. Thverybody is vulnerable to all sorts of accidents and diseases, perhaps we should try'andput it a bit more intoperspective and see this kind of vulnerability as one vulnerability among a whole lot of vulnerabilities that both men and women are subject to. Men aren't subject to this, at least not quite in the same way to this particular one, but others they are certainly subject to. To be human is to be vulnerable. I mean, as someone once

WOQ/A 85 1 - 20 20

wrote, I think it was Pascal, 'just a little grain of dust, a little drop of water can bring about your death,'how vulnerable we are, how precarious human existence is. Even though man 'nay look big and strong in comparison to a woman, but actually, basically, he is no less vulnerable than she is.

V: There does seem to be something quite Wpsychologically damaging about sexual attack on women, it has long term effects.

S: Yes, so far we have just been talking about the fear of attack. But in the case of attack well yes, I would agree.

V: But I mean the fear is quite strong.

Parami: Most people that I know..., it would probably be true to say that most women I know, if they haven't been attacked themselves someone very close to them has been attacked.

S: Which is very common, far more cases than get into the newspapers. It is a quite unpleasant feature of social life, no doubt. That is in itself a question, why is there so much because it does seem, in a way, such an unnatural thing. It is quite clear now, from investigations that have been carried out, it is very rarely due to excessive sexual appetite. The psychological reasons are quite different, frustrated aggressive- ness and in some cases even feelings of resentment against women generally. This seems to be quite common.

V: it doesn't seem to be due to sexual provocation.

S: Very often not, no, because very often the women are old women and sometimes after breaking into a house and so on and so forth. It's quite a serious social problem.

V: I think probably most women on solitary go through fear of that sort.

S: It's not surprising, I do know that one or two women on solitary retreat, perhaps in a quite isolated place, have seen a man walking across a field and they can't resist a little shadow of fear, you don't know. Even objectively, leaving aside the silly fears, you don't know, because these things do happen in modern life, unfortunately. It is, probably, one of the more serious social problems of time, it seems to be, if anything, getting worse, rather than better, in Britain. Possibly in Western Europe it is the same. So I think one has to accept the fact that such things do happen and since when they do happen they are quite terrible in their effects be sensible about the objective existence of the danger and take reasonable precautions. Just as you would against a mugging or a burglary or a road accident or anything else of that sort. And don't be afraid, because of false feelings of independence, to take the help of protection of the men that you know and trust. If you feel that you ought to be escorted home, well ask someone to escort you home on a dark night. Don't be afraid to ask them, or ask a couple of other women to go with them. Don't be reckless. It is unfortunate that one should have to take these precautions, but I think one has to recognise the objective situation. Anyway, let's go on.

WOQ/A 85 2 - 1 21

(Gap in recording while tape changed)

S: This follows on from this question of self confidence, or lack of self confidence and especially as this question of lack of self confidence was mentioned in connection with ordination; one of the things that I have found in being with women within the movement, something that one has to be very aware about, especially when they are asking for ordination is that there is very often a definite tendency to compliance. A tendency to agree without there being real agreement, do you see what I mean?

V: You mean

S: No, not necessarily just with me but with, say, the outlook or attitudes of the Movement generally, what it stands for. There is very often, I find, a mood of compliance because the woman wants to be accepted and very often ordination is seen in terms of acceptance. So she will say all the right things, do all the right things, work very hard, but basically it represents an attitude of compliance, which is in many ways a group attitude. So I think one has to be very careful to try and see through this in dealing with women who ask for ordination.

'Do you think now that there are some other things holding back women Order Members apart from the ones you have recently mentioned, i.e. lack of confidence, passivity, etc.?'

S: I think I have given a long enough catalogue, haven't I, over the years. I don't think at

the moment I have anything to add, I should jolly well hope not anyway!

'Vajrayogini mentioned, last summer, that she thought that women Order Members hold each other back. Do you think there is any truth in this, if so how do you think we could change this?'

S: There might be something in it, I won't be very sure of this, but I have sometimes thought I noticed that women Order Members, as compared with at least some men Order Members don't like to seem to stand out. Do you see what I mean? I won't be too positive about this, I have been sort of keeping my eye on the situation and maybe it will change anyway just because it has been mentioned. It's just as they tend to seek to keep all on the same level, to go ahead all together, no-one likes to go out a bit ahead, as it were, a bit in front. As I say, I won't be too sure of this, it's just something that has occurred to me from time to time and it may link up with what vajrayogini says, at least maybe give it some thought.

'Even after years of practice as an Order Member lack of confidence can be felt quite strongly, what can one do to heal this, as lack of confidence amongst women, including Order Members, appears to be holding the situation back for women as a whole in the Movement?'

S: It's quite a big question and obviously it is a very general question. In the case of anyone lacking in confidence, well, how does one increase their confidence. I did mention

WOQ/A 85 2 - 2      22

a little while ago that I felt that people should just be encouraged to do things, step by step and little by little. I think here the importance of very close contact and hence communication and very positive encouragement by your close Kalyana Mitras really can't be overestimated. I don't think it is so much a question of general encouragement, I think very strong definite encouragement from those who are close to you. It almost doesn't matter what other people say, well perhaps you don't take too much notice of that anyway, but it is what those who are close to you say that really matters. Sometimes a mother or a sister can be very undermining.

V:            (Indistinct)

S:        Oh dear I have touched something there. One actually sees this, mothers undermining daughters in a very radical sort of way. You can no doubt be undermined by about anybody. But it is all the more important that those who are close to you in a spiritual sense should take care to be very encouraging and positive, say 'yes come on you can do it', or 'let's do it together', or 'I'll show you'. Just when you are timidly entering upon some new field. This is why learning new things is also important, as I mentioned earlier on, it does give you extra confidence. If you learn a language, I think it gives you tremendous confidence, or learn a new subject or a new skill. So perhaps people, generally, should be much more adventurous in this way and encourage one another to be much more adventurous. But again, there is no magic remedy or recipe or particular technique. Alright, let's go on.

'One of the main things women must do to be able to Go for Refuge is to become

independent.'

S: I agree with this but I sometimes prefer the word 'autonomous'. Independent can have a slightly negative meaning, so autonomous. Autonomous means acting of your own volition, your own initiative. It means governing yourself, directing yourself. Otherwise sometimes people say, 'I like to be independent, I am not going to be dependent on anybody'. And that can have a slightly negative feel.

'Most of the women who have been ordained recently have either never lived in a community or have not for some years. Also most of them do not work in co-ops. (S: co-ops again!) You strongly recommend women to live in single sex communities, (S: Change of subject!) can you see anything in the existing communities and co-ops which does not conduce to independence? As some women seem to feel the need to get away from those situations in order to be able to Go for Refuge.'

S: It's fair to add that some men have sometimes felt this too.

'Can you suggest anything in particular that we need to develop in our communities or co-ops?'

S: I think the only time that this happens is when people start feeling that the community, instead of being bracing and challenging, has become a bit like a substitute for home and

WOQ/A 85 2 - 3 23

family. A bit too cosy, a bit too settled. I think it is then that some people, who sincerely want to go for refuge, feel that they need to 'go forth' from that situation. This is sometimes what happens in the case of a sincere person who is living in this rather homey sort of community, type situation, which occasionally happens. But sometimes it happens that their desire to leave the community, to live on their own is a rationalisation. They really want to lead their own private life, as it were, they don't want to be challenged. So I think there are these two kinds of instances, these two kinds of situations. Where someone, perhaps, has a valid reason for thinking that they have to leave the community if they really want to go forth because the community is too comfortable and not enough challenging. Where on the other hand it is too challenging and they can't bear that, they don't want to change certain aspects of themselves.

So one has to try to assess which it happens to be in any particular case. Or whether your community, in fact, is too comfortable, or perhaps even over challenging or prematurely challenging. You have to look at that. 'Can you suggest anything in particular that we need to develop in our communities and co-ops?' That's quite a broad question, there are all sorts of things, more intense communication, obviously. Greater friendship, reliability, all these things. Doing more things together, genuinely together, at the same time leaving some space for solitariness. Even in the community, I think, occasionally people should be able to be quite by themselves.

'You say women are additionally burdened by their reproductive urges, tendencies. If nature is blind, (as the poets say) are women therefore more natural and by deduction more blind than men?'

S: Well yes if one grants the premise one grants the conclusion. (laughter) I think all instincts are blind, whether they are reproductive urges or tendencies, or any other. That is the great difference between the lower and higher evolution. In the lower evolution you are governed by instincts which are largely unconscious, more in the nature of drives. In the higher evolution you are directed much more by awareness and self consciousness. So I think the reproductive urges in both sexes, or reproductive tendencies are blind. Sometimes you just lose sight of all other considerations, it is nature at work. through you trying to reproduce the species, not caring about your individual fate or destiny. If it so, as I think it is, that women are additionally burdened by their reproductive urges then they will be, to that extent, a bit more blind than men. Right then, questions on reproduction and the female will.

'On listening to the Wreath of Blue Lotus~ I understood the female will as the power mode manifesting through emotional blackmail, unclarity and manipulation. In a recent question and answer session I believe you co-related the female will with the gravitational pull of biological conditioning. I am not sure that I understand the female will and would be pleased if you would elucidate as I think it is important.

S: Well female ~ill is not a scientific concept. Female will Ths an expression used by Blake and it is a sort of poetic

WOQ/A 85 2 - 4 24

expression. A possible definition or explanation that does occur to me is this; let's say that by definition, what is a woman - by definition?

V: We tried that the other night and we didn't know (laughter)

S: Well it's quite simple, a woman is a female human being. A female of the human species. So I would say, this is something that has occurred to me just at this moment, that the female will can be defined in these terms. This is one possible definition, because as I have said it is of more poetic conception. We all understand what is meant by will. I mentioned the other day that often will is defined as the sum total of energy available to the conscious subject. So as a human being you have a will, as a female human being, as a woman, you have a will. But supposing you were, as it were, alienated, as a woman or as a female from your humanity. And supposing the sum total of energy that is available to you, in the form of your will, finds expression ~~~~~rel through your femaleness instead of through your femaleness as conjoined to your humanity. That then I would call the female will. Do you see what I mean? The will then becomes entirely at the service of you as a female, rather than you as a female human being, i.e. as a woman. So the female will

involves, therefore, an element of alienation. Alienation from your humanity.

V: Could you give examples of how that would express itself?

S: For instance, if a woman regarded biological interests or functions as absolutely paramount and was prepared to go all out to satisfy those and manipulate and emotionally blackmail and all the rest of the things that are mentioned, losing sight of her humanity and its interests.

Vajrasuri: What's the opposite; what if a male does the same kind of thing? Is that..., he's still using female will or is he using

S: No, I would say you can't speak of female will but you can speak of masculinity, or maleness, being alienated from humanity, so that you then have a male will which has lost sight of the humanity to which it belongs. I think you get instances of this sort of thing in things like football hooliganism.

Vajrasuri: And rape.

S: And rape, yes.

Parami: But would you say that men never manifest a female will? Because I have understood the Blakean term to. ...

S: Well human nature is very complicated, there are inter- mediate types. And as one is not dealing with scientific analyses and classifications, one is being more impressionistic. But I took up this term female will, perhaps I am not using it quite in the sense that Blake intended. He doesn't define his terms very precisely, that is the last thing, one might say, that

WOQ/A 85 2 - 5 25

he wants to do. So I am sort of taking up this term and shaping it to my own purposes within the FWBO.

Parami: It was actually me that asked that question, I think that is partly why... (S: I didn't recognise the hand writing) I disguised it. (laughter) I think it was because I was trying to see it and correlate it to Blake's term which I am little bit familiar with and therefore found it a bit confusing. So I wanted to hear you say what you meant by that term.

S: I certainly think that the term could be used in that sort of way. Because there is the element of., there's this Female Will and it is female with a capital 'F' and will with a capital 'W'. It does suggest an exclusion of the purely human element. As though the whole energy of the personality is behind the femaleness; and sometimes one feels that with some women in certain situations. That they have almost ceased to be human, their whole will their whole energy is just functioning through their femaleness.

Parami: And you would tie that up, generally speaking, with the biological, or not necessarily?

S: It very often, yes, is connected with an assertion of the purely biological, reproductive function. Though it can be, we might say in the case of further alienation, even alienated from that. I've known in the past some women who exemplified this very, very strongly. First of all the femaleness is alienated from the humanity, to a great extent, and you have all the will behind the femaleness, that is what we call female will. But then, that in its term is sometimes alienated from any biological interest and can go even into politics. I've seen this in the case of one particular woman that I knew quite well in India.

V: Can this become Asura like?

S: Yes. This woman, in this particular case, originally I suppose when she was much younger was a quite charming and attractive woman but she did become quite Asura like in almost a masculine sort of way. She also happened to have quite a good brain.

V: Is that the equivalent of, if you are a woman and you are working in what you call the power mode, would that necessarily be female will or would that...?

S: No, I think actually the female will is more distorted. The power mode is more straightforward and in a way more honest.

And most people, to begin with after all, they do function according to the power mode and you learn the love mode with great difficulty.

Parami: Maybe it's too big a question for you to answer here but then I don't think I understand the reason for this tape any more. (S: Pardon) I don't understand what you were saying in the Wreath of Blue Lotus any more.

S: I must say I haven't listened to the lecture since I

WOQ/A 85 2 - 6 26

gave it, maybe I should listen to it again.

Parami: It's quite interesting (laughter)

S: I am supposed to be editing it quite soon.

V: You do use the story about Mahaprajapati Gotami as an example of someone wanting ordination for the wrong reasons and using the Female Will, she manipulates, but. ...

S: Perhaps what I was getting at more there was using the power mode rather than the love mode, which is a more simple thing.

V: You also say to the men present, well you all experience this ordination, so it does seem an odd usage.

S: Maybe I should look at it again then. Maybe using the power mode, in that context, would be sufficient. Maybe bringing in the expression of Female Will from Blake confuses

the issue in a way.

Parami: That's why I felt it did tie up with using the term in a particular kind of way.

S: In the case of Mahaprajapati, what I was, I think, pointing out was that she had resorted to the *fait accompli* by putting on the yellow robe. Not by coming to see the Buddha, not by repeatedly requesting it, but by putting on the yellow robe so that she was in fact ordained already, even though she was asking here for ordination. She shaved her head and put on the yellow robes and then came and asked for ordination.

V: So do you think that is not the Female Will, the *fait accompli*?

S: I think I'd have to look again at that lecture and see, and maybe look up my Blake again and my Blake dictionary and reassess the whole thing. But certainly, in one way or the other, she was operating in accordance with the power mode. It is simply whether the term Female Will is appropriate in that case, I will just have to consider that.

Parami: I think a number of women have found that point a bit confusing.

S: Perhaps I need a footnote on what exactly the Female Will is. I've no doubt first I have to check up what Blake himself actually said. Questions on Men, Women, attitudes expressed and books read in the Movement.

'Beginners coming into the Movement seem to need encouragement. However some new women become confused and~upset by reading seemingly critical things about women in seminar transcripts before they have had an opportunity to develop sufficient self confidence or positivity to view these comments objectively. When asked we say 'these comments are made in a certain context to men', this does not seem a totally satisfactory answer.

WOQ/A 85 2 - 7      27

S: Well obviously it is a question of whether the comment is true or not.

'And anyway, the material is often published and available to men and women. This experience of the Movement seems to undermine these women's faith in the Movement. Are you aware that women get thus discouraged and that women Order Members spend time sorting out those reactions without being totally clear themselves at why these comments are made i.e. particularly to men for a reason or as objective comments on women generally? Could you comment?'

S: the whole situation worse! ... a whole new lot of tapes to be transcribed I can understand the situation of new women of that sort because it is a particular case of new comers generally and their reactions. Some people are put off by our comments on Christianity. Some are put off by our comments on the family and these in fact seem to be the two things that put people off most. Perhaps some are put off by my or other people's comments about women, or for that matter comments about men. So the question is, what is one to do? In the analogous case of Christianity, can we disguise or can I disguise what I

really think and feel about Christianity. Or is it possible for all of my views, say, about Christianity to be available all at the same time. Because my views are not all unfavourable, by any means. But in certain respects I am very unfavourable. But someone might hear the unfavourable comment about Christianity and just react to that and not bother to find out everything that I have said on the subject. So it is much the same in the case of women who are upset about some of the comments that I have made on tape about women. I think if they heard everything that I had said on the subject, on all occasions, in all contexts, if they were basically reasonable I think they wouldn't be reactive. But I think the difficulty is to deal with the situation where they come up against one particular remark and that is perhaps taken as representing one's whole attitude. I don't think one can avoid these things, I can't certainly avoid them, because I come across them, let us say, when commenting on texts. In a recent study group, I think it was a women's study group somewhere, we had the line in a Mahayana text, a sort of prayer or aspiration, 'may all women become men'. Well then I have to explain that, as best I can, or maybe men ask me questions and then I reply as honestly as I can to those questions. How are we to ensure that women who are new comers to the movement don't immediately encounter material within this area which is going to bring about, perhaps, a reaction, in some of them? How are we to do this? Because at present almost every- thing is available to everybody. In the way of tapes, we don't now limit tapes to Order Members even, Mitras can have free access to tapes, transcriptions - even Friends can. So what are we to do? Because it is very difficult to cover the whole field immediately, it is almost as though they need an initial faith. But some of them, not only with regard to the question of women, but with the question of Christianity are very easily and quickly put off, perhaps.

Vajrasuri: They are, actually they are, yes.

S: So I think in all of these cases, it is very difficult to do anything, whether with regard to men who are put off or

WOQ/A 85 2 - 8 28

women who are put off, and for whatsoever reason, unless they can develop at least a little bit of confidence in Order Members, who can at least say, 'well please hear everything on this subject and please try and understand what we are getting at and what Bhante is getting at before you make up your mind finally.' I think that this is all that we can really say, if we can get in quick enough. Short of actually, virtually censoring our material, which probably wouldn't be a practicable possibility. I must say that I do get the impression that nowadays that women who react in this way are definitely in a minority, because I get nowadays so many letters from new women not only from this country but overseas, saying how much they appreciate the movement and how much they appreciate having the Dharma made available to them in an intelligible form. In a way that they can practice.

Parami: I think some women feel both those things at the same time and it causes conflict. Because they do feel that they are incredibly grateful that you have helped clarify a number of issues for them. You have actually yourself, and Order Members to a lesser degree have given them a possibility in life that they didn't have before and that gives them a great faith and great encouragement. And then they come..., they do read things, or they hear things, or

they hear things out of context, sometimes in transcriptions in tapes, sometimes from some men who repeat things, perhaps, clumsily. Then they end up in conflict, and that is what is quite sad.

S: So what would you say were the actual stumbling blocks, specifically?

Parami: Well..., if other people can help, because everybody comes up against this, I think. But I suppose some women feel that within the Movement there is definitely a view that women are less able to develop, or less capable of development than men.

S: Well, in a sense that is true, but personally nowadays if I am asked about this I don't speak in terms of capability and I always avoid the language of inferiority and superiority, but I have come to the conclusion that many women have a sort of handicap by the virtue of the fact that they are women, and I have come to this conclusion just as a result of my dealings with women, especially after coming back to this country. Because if you, say, go through the Survey or go through the Three Jewels, there is no such view expressed at all, I just hadn't had to consider it there. When I was in India, if I had been asked I probably would have said that there's not really any difference in this respect. But I must say, that over the years in this country, I have found that women, for one reason or another, do seem to find it more difficult to develop, or develop at least at a slower pace. So if one doesn't say this when challenged well one is just not being honest.

Parami: I think sometimes there is a tone, suggested or implied or taken from comments like that, there is a value judgement then made. Also if women do have a lack of self confidence, which we seem to be in fair agreement that we do, then that lack of self confidence is exacerbated

WOQ/A 85 2 - 9 29

S: Well yes, because this puts a male Order Member or even puts me, also in a way in a difficult position. Because on the one hand one doesn't want to discourage anybody, but one also has to say what one actually thinks to be true, because one has found it so in one's experience. So this is why I always try to emphasise that the Buddha say, we have it in the scriptures quite categorically, that; yes Ananda, women are capable of higher spiritual attainments. So this is well known to, and accepted by everybody within the Movement. And this is our basic position, but that basic position being given, it does seem that women do move more slowly, to say the least, than men, and as far as I can ~akQ out it seems to be due, basically, to the somewhat greater degree of identification with the reproductive process. I can't personally find any other explanation that I can regard as reasonable.

V: Bhante, you have mentioned this word 'backlog' in relation to women. Is that different to this?

S: No, I think that is different. I think when I speak of backlog I am speaking of psychological things, not anything innate, but difficult early experiences usually due to no fault of the woman herself. Perhaps she was sexually molested when she was a child, those sort of things seem quite common. Or very involved relationships with mother or father in

early life. When I speak of backlog I am speaking of those sort of psychological complications which are not inherent, as far as I can see, in the woman, but are due to early experiences etc.

Vidyasri: I think another example of things that people have found difficult, women have found difficult, both friends and Mitras, for instance, in some of the Mitratas.in which mainly the seminars you were talking to men about men so that through most of the seminar extracts it's about 'he~ this and 'he' that with maybe no mention of women except critical mention. So that one example that I can think of was the Mitrata on Speech, in which nothing is mentioned about women except some very derogatory comments on women's trivial speech, domestic speech. And the tone of the comments, there is a lot of laughter, it says laughter in brackets. And I think, that again, it does upset people and I think it is partly because there is no mention of women except in this rather jokey, derogatory sense, which people take personally.

S: Well this means there has to be more careful editing. Whatever maybe the actual material, whatever may be one's objective viewpoints, but one just needs to edit that material more carefully. I do know that the Mitrata production team has tried very hard to get material from seminars with women but very often that material is not available from women's seminars. Fortunately or unfortunately they say, on women's seminars it is usually Bhante talking and talking and there is not really much in the way of question or comment or feedback from the women on the seminar. But sometimes, I know, the production team, who are all women of course, have tried quite hard to try to balance things and find something that is said by women or some question raised by women, but it very often hasn't been possible.

But even apart from that, yes, perhaps in the case of Mitrata especially we do just need to be more careful with the editing. We could always add things in brackets to correct

WOQ/A 85 2 - 10 30

any imbalance or even add a footnote or additional material.

V: If you only noticed this when you came back U England is it more true of Western women or ?

S: In particular, what are you referring to?

V: I don't know but you said that you only noticed.., if you had been asked before you came back to England you would have said that there is no difference in men and women.

S: I think in India I didn't have occasion to work with women spiritually. (end side 1) I tended, therefore, to take the view, when I was in India, if I had been working with women as with men there wouldn't have been any difference. And if I wasn't working with women it was just because I was a monk and since I was living as a monk in the orthodox way I didn't have much to do with women, I had more to do with men. So I think, if I had been asked these questions in India, I would have said that women would make the same sort of progress as men. But actually, it was only after I came back to England and started the FWBO that I

actually started working closely with women in this sort of way and to monitor their progress. Encourage them and talk to them just as I had done, say with men, though to a lesser extent, in India. So I think my doubts, if you can call them that, with regards to women have definitely arisen in this country. That is why I think you find no trace of them in anything that I wrote in India, it didn't occur to me that there might be some difference in this respect. Even though, despite what I read in Buddhist scriptures, I didn't think about it very seriously, but I might have said at that time, if I had been asked, that that was just due to conditions in those days and they don't pertain now. But I don't think that I think in that way now, after actual experience. The most positive construction I can put on it is that women just move at a slower rate, or take things more steadily.

V: Generally speaking.

S: Generally speaking, yes, I think generally speaking. Very few women whizz ahead, as it were.

Parami: I think when you sit here and say that, that is very reasonably, I don't know how other people feel but I find that quite reasonable, on the whole. But I think what Vidyasri says is true, it is often the tone.

S: I think that is quite right. Because, well one knows that There is always such a thing as tension between the sexes. I personally believe, I have said this on a seminar, I think in a sense there is a state of warfare between the sexes, to the extent that each sex identifies with its own sex. I think each sex is always trying to get the better of the other, by whatsoever means! yes. I think each sex is, very often, trying to put the other down.

Parami: I think a lot of women feel that you encourage men to do that, actually.

WOQ/A 85 2 - 11 31

S: Well I don't encourage men to put women down, even by way of too much of an emphasis on what may be an objective fact. But at the same time, I am afraid, very often men have to be warned about women. Not necessarily because of anything that the women do or might do but because of the men's own weaknesses, and the same thing applies to women I think to all women in the same sort of way.

Vajrasuri: I think it would be a good idea if just those two or three extra words, men's own weaknesses, or women's own weaknesses, were added because otherwise women tend to hear. ...

S: I think I have added them quite often.

Vajrasuri: I know, when I have to meet this problem, and I have to make this answer, this is how I have helped myself get over it. I explain the weaknesses that men have and women are willing to accept that fact.

S: But when one says 'weakness' in this connection, either with regard to men or with regard to women, maybe even weakness is not quite the right word. Perhaps it is more a

question of 'susceptibility'. You see what I mean (V: Yes) you want to avoid that particular susceptibility, especially in particular contexts. For instance on retreats when you are trying to meditate and so on. It is not as though there is some Mata Hari like - sort of woman trying to lure you away from your meditation - though I have seen that (laughter and voices) it is quite exceptional now within the FWBO but it used to be very common. But yes, if one speaks in terms of susceptibility. This just reminds me, for instance, it is a little bit off the track but it was in my mind to say. I heard some programme on the BBC, I think it was 'Any questions', and there was a woman on it who was the chairman of some committee under the GLC and she had been campaigning against sexism. Valerie someone.

V's Valerie Wise

S: Yes, and one of the things she had been campaigning against is advertisements for women's underwear on the tube. Because, well you can imagine the reasons why. So I personally felt quite sympathetic to that because I regard as, among other things, giving unnecessary stimulation to men. If everywhere is placarded with these sorts of pictures and advertisements not only does it emphasise woman as a sex object, as the feminists would say, which it does, but it also it gives unnecessary provocation to men who are easily enough provoked anyway. So I felt quite sympathetic to that ~L I had happened to be in London a few days before and on the underground and I couldn't help noticing when I saw these advertisements of women in various kinds of underwear, I couldn't help noticing that the women who were riding on the escalators past these advertisements were even more scantily dressed. So I think that feminists have got to attend to that as well as to the ads. But this just is in connection with this whole question of susceptibility. The sexes are susceptible to each other, so I think one has to objectively recognise this fact. This doesn't mean that woman is invariably a temptress or that man is invariably a seducer. Sometimes they are but not invariably. But yes, I also agree that a lot depends upon tone. One has to try and be objective and reasonable and not try to make it an expression of the sex warfare that usually goes on between the

the sexes, with one always trying to get the better of the other.

WOn/A P9 2 - 12

32 V: And using Bhante as backup.

S: Well you can use me as backup too.

Parami: You don't give us quite the same amount as ammunition (laughter)

S: I think you have got quite a lot of ammunition, you should just listen to some of the tapes, even sometimes of things that I have said to men. Listen to them carefully, you will find quite a lot of ammunition.

Parami: (Unclear)

S: I think there are some things I say that people don't hear. Some people have sometimes admitted this, in different contexts, both men and women, that there are some things they never heard the first time they went through the tape, even quite important things. Often you

fasten on something which in a sense perhaps, you are looking for or expecting, and other things you just pass over. But anyway, what is it, actually, that we were originally talking about? Oh yes, so what are we going to do about these newcomers. I think, as I said at the beginning, I think you just have to ask them to be patient and say that there is more to the FWBO than that, or there is more to be said, either by Bhante or anybody else, on that particular topic. And you have just got part of it, please be patient and try to understand

Because, yes, as I have said, there are sometimes areas of conflict. Someone feels attracted by the FWBO as a whole but not by certain things that they hear, whether rightly or wrongly. But on the other hand one has, in a way, one's own difficulty of not wanting to offend or discourage people but on the other hand wanting to be honest according to one's lights, whether rightly or wrongly. So perhaps people even have to accept that though there may be a certain amount of disagreement. One has to be strong enough to stand that.

Samata: Bhante, can I ask something which is in a way to do with beginners who come along, who see the movement as very much segregated into men and women. In a way this is connected with what we have just been saying, that if say someone is putting a talk across to a mens Order Mitra event, 'keep away from women', and saying to women 'keep away from men'. The impression on new people coming along is..., well they don't really know why that is, there is just a sort of separation.

S: It is of course up to us. It does happen in other situations too.

Samata: But it is often not actually qualified or said clearly what the reasons are.

S: I think the Order Members concerned need to be much more clear and much more confident. I don't know how clear and how confident they are, they must not adopt a sort of apologetic attitude. I think this is often what happens, that they need to convey conviction on this score, then I think there will be no difficulty.

Samata: But it's as though the other side isn't stressed, if there is a healthy relationship or friendship between a man and a woman, that side, it doesn't seem to be a possibility. It doesn't seem to come into the picture that that is possible

for....

WOQ/A 85 2 - 16 33

S: I must say that as far as I have seen it is something That is achieved with difficulty, and people are so ready to rationalise, both men and women. So it's a question of holding a balance between being true to what we ourselves believe and have found to be useful and not giving too much of a shock to beginners. It's just the same with the shrine, with the puja that also puts off some new people, but we can't disguise the fact that we are Buddhists and we do worship the Buddha and we perform puja. Middle way, not playing down too much, not playing down in an apologetic way, but not pushing too much either.

Parami: Could I take your point about us explaining things to people. Because I think one of our problems is purely logistical. In that, in a sense the women in the Movement, and I

suppose I am thinking particularly at the LBC at the moment, we are bottom heavy, if you know what I mean. (laughter)

S: (laughing) Do you mean you are fundamentally heavy?!

Parami: What I mean is, if you look at it in terms of a hierarchy, with Order Members, then the Mitras and then the Friends, then there is a lot more in the bottom layer than there is at the top. (S: Yes, of course) And actually those of us who are there could spend all our time, we could take it on as a full time job, every woman, explaining these sort of things to people. And actually we can't always do it all the time, and I think that is partly the problem, rather than unclarity or lack of intention.

S: Well perhaps this needs to be thrashed out at a council meeting, and on certain suitable occasions things of this sort just need to be spelled out by whoever is around. For instance our attitude with regard to the puja, the so called segregation - I think the word segregation should be avoided because it has unpleasant connotations of South Africa and all the rest, and any other. Our attitude towards Christianity, just sort of spell it out. Say, 'look, we are Buddhists, we have certain definite attitudes, there are certain things that we have found useful, we are open to you, we are available to you, we would like you to make every use of our facilities and benefit from contact with us. But there are a few things that you may find difficult to understand at first, or even off-putting. They are such and such and such and such, we ask you just to be patient, and to get to know us a bit better before making up your mind finally about these things.

V: Yes, I have done that at a weekend of people Throm a Battle retreat. Told them the things that they might find difficult in the future

S: Perhaps we should make a regular practice of this.

Parami: I think, I don't know how much you have, but I think one of the things that happens is; say some women read something or they come across something in a talk at the centre or they come across something said by a man Order Member which they take to be offensive, we hear that as Order Members. We might talk to some of the men Order Members about that and say 'could you a bit more tactful', that is seen as us attempting to cater to feminism, and feminism seems to have bad press. Which I think a certain amount is attributed back to you, that

WOQ/A 85 2 - 17 34

bad press, I haven't really heard you talk much about it but...

S: Well I have talked about feminism, but the main thing I Wave always said is that I think there are two kinds of feminism. One I call feminism with a small 'f' and the other I call Feminism with a big 'F'. Say, feminism with a small 'f' I would say consisting of believing that women, in the same way as men, must have a full opportunity to develop all their potential in what- soever fields, whether it is education or whether it is political, whether it is political, business, spiritual. I don't speak in terms of equality, I don't like that language, but certainly equality of opportunity. And that no hindrance or barrier must be placed in the

way of women - even in whatsoever field. So I call this feminism with a small 'f', and I see this sort of feminism as fully consistent with a Buddhist attitude. But Feminism with a big 'F' is the Feminism which teaches a hatred of men and teaches that hatred of men is necessary and is a good thing and which also indulges in what I regard as mythology to the effect that the whole of history is nothing but the story of the oppression of women by men. I don't deny that some oppression has taken place, obviously it has, but to try to interpret the whole of history in this way, I think, is misguided.

Parami: I think it is very unlikely, and I presume you would think it is very unlikely that any Order Member would subscribe to that.

S: I know that no woman Order Member subscribes to the latter, I know that.

Parami: But I do think sometimes, maybe other people disagree with me, but I have found that when I have tried to talk, I think quite reasonably and quite logically to men Order Members. I don't always speak reasonably but when I have tried to, then..., that I am sometimes told that you are asking me to cater to a weakness in women, and I think that's....

S: Again, one has to follow a middle way. One doesn't want actually to cater to a weakness, not really, but on the other hand one has to exercise a certain amount of tact. It is difficult to lay down hard and fast rules, it is just up to the intelligence and the sensitivity of the person actually in the situation. I mean, sometimes, even a rampant Feminist with a capital 'F' on a particular occasion you might just let her get away with something. One of the things I have also said, quite a number of times recently, is that with new comers, avoid tangling in an argument. Whether it is about Christianity, yes it usually comes up in connection with Christianity, don't necessarily say exactly what you think about Christianity, even if asked. You can say something more..., 'as Buddhists we don't believe in God but some people do and if that is what they want to believe we have nothing against that'. Be quite mild. Supposing some rampant Feminist says, 'the whole of history is nothing but the record of men oppressing women', don't say, 'no I think you are wrong and I think you are prejudiced', which may be true. Just say, 'well it is true that there are many instances of the sort of oppression that you refer to.' Just say that, at least go half way, but avoid an argument or confrontation, with any beginner on any of these sensitive issues, but without giving up your own point of view.

WOQ/A 85 2 - 18 3f-4o

I think a lot of people are quite competitive and maybe men are more- competitive - than women, they want to argue. I think

this is not wise, it is not desirable. You can keep the argument until you know that person much better and you can then really have an argument. But I think avoid arguments of that sort with newcomers. Even if you don't agree with what they say, go along with it at least to some extent, even in the case of rampant Feminists and avoid argument for the time being. Unless of course they are trying to disrupt the class and make it just an arena for their own holding forth. Then you may have just to ask them to stop. But maybe you should talk more with some of the men Order Members, and talk more in the council about it, being

yourselves as reasonable as you can. So that the men Order Members don't say, 'ohgosh,another Feminist within the movement'.

(end of tape 2)

Next Session:-

'During the men'-national Order weekend in April, you spoke of a more unified Order. Can you suggest any practical way of achievin this? What about mature Order Members of both sexes coming together for seminars, study situations, thus providing a concrete example of non--olarisation of the sexes within the Order. A transcendence of 'the differences between men and women to be arrived at, which would affect the overall vision through- out the Movement.

S: I think one has to be quite clear what are means and what are ends. I think as a result of our past social conditioning in the West we tend to think that it is a natural, and therefore a desirable state of affairs for men and women to do everything together. And sometimes I think in the movement, people accept the fact of separate, single sex activites as a sort of temporary measure. A temporary aberation from the norm, and they look forward, at some future date, to everybody doing everything together. I am not saying that at some future date everybody won't do everything together, but that is not to be regarded as an aim. In a sense that it is regarded as a getting back

WOQ/A 85 3 - 2 41

Y'~LL~al to a thoroughly state of affairs in the natural or ordinary sort of way. Do yo~see what I mean? So I think it is very important that one shouldn't think of things in this sort of way. If men and women Order Members do develop as individuals, or at least if some do develop as individuals sufficiently. If they are well into their meditation and if they understand the Dharma deeply, if they are less polarised, so to speak, in respect of their masculinity and femininity. If in fact they have reached an angelic level, almost, and are really dwelling in the Brahma Viharas then there will be no harm in their coming together for a little study or meditation or for any other purpose. But I think one has got to be thinking in terms of getting to that state, rather than thinking in terms of getting to a situation in which men and women can mingle more freely. Do you see what I mean? I think that is the important thing. I think one musn ' t put the cart before the horse, as we say. If men and women Order Members concentrate on being more truly individuals, and not being and not acting in a polarised sort of way, the question of men and women Order Members coming together more frequently than at present will look after itself. As I said at the beginning, one has got to be very careful of that unconscious tendency, due to prior social conditioning to think in terms of getting back to what is in fact after all the normal and even right and proper situation. And also, of course, one must thinkthattheunityof the order is primarily spiritual. You don't for instance contribute to the unity of the Order, by say, throwing a party for men and women Order Members alike, do you. You contribute to the unity of the Order if you are more true to your own going for Refuge and your own practice of the precepts. If all Order Members are doing that, then that is the greatest possible contribution to the unity of the Order. That is where your unity really lies, in your common commitment, your common

practice, your common meditation. You might well go off to a football match together and throw bottles! (laughing) but it doesn't contribute to the unity of the Order very much. Anyway enough on that. Alright then, the Movement is the heading. A whole series of questions by somebody, nine questions! One's been scratched outkiough.

'A book you have recommended in recent years, especially to men in the Movement, is 'Sex and Character', by Otto Weiniger. Weiniger professes that the nature of woman is completely uncon- scious and biological, that by nature she is incapable of higher levels of consciousness. Although he admits to a spectrum of levels of masculinity and femininity he thinks that no woman has been or could be, truly creative. Those who have seemed to be - he gives examples of women writers - are merely imitating men. Linked with this he thinks that women are incapable~ethical actions. You obviously don't fully agree with this otherwise you would not ordain women. Why do you recommend the book? '

S: 'A book that you have recommended in recent years, especially U men in the Movement.' I don't think I recommend it generally. I have a distinct recollection, in fact, of recommending it only to one person because he was interested in that subject. But I know that others, knowing that I recommended it to that person and wanted to read it. And even one or two women have been curious to read it because I recommended it to that one particular person. So I wouldn't say that it is a book that I recommend full stop, I wouldn't say that at all. That particular person to

WOQ/A 85 3 - 3 42

whom I had recommended was interested in this whole question of sex and character and this was the only book that I knew of on that particular subject. I also lent it with a distinct caution on the subject of the authors anti-semitism. So it certainly it isn't a book that as a whole I recommend. Nonetheless it is very interesting. I don't remember very clearly what exactly he says on this subject but if what the question says is correct well he seems to contradict himself. Because although he admits to a spectrum of levels of masculinity and femininity he thinks that no woman has been or could be truly creative. Well I suppose it depends what you mean by creative, taking it in the ordinary sense, I don't think one could say that women cannot be creative. Because some women have been creative. He gives the example of women writers, saying that they are merely imitating men, I don't think that can be sustained. I don't think you can say, for instance, that Jane Austen merely imitated men, or that Charlotte Bronte merely imitated men. Maybe, yes, they did model their fiction on the current fiction in some respects, but the men obviously did the same, so I wouldn't agree with that. I think, from what I remember, a little bit is coming back to me now, I think Weiniger was protesting against an unreal over-idealisation of women, such as was very common in the last century during the Victorian period. Where women were considered as angelic creatures. There was even one very famous poem that was very popular, it sold, I think almost hundreds of thousands of copies, called 'The Angel in the House', by Coventry Patmore Woman was conceived of as an angel. And for instance, medical authorities did state that women had no sexual feelings, because they were too pure to have sexual feelings, it was only men that had sexual feelings. And it was the duty of the pure woman, out of pure sense of duty to submit to the highly unwelcome, invasives of the male, just for the sake of producing offspring. And in that way doing her duty. So I think, Weiniger, who wrote at the beginning of this century is to be seen, to some extent, as a reaction against this very

unreal way of looking at women. He stressed the fact that woman was a biological creature etc. etc., and no doubt he went, in some ways, to extremes in this respect. Nowadays, perhaps, we can see that the truth lies somewhere between the two. But I haven't read the book for quite a few years so I can't comment on, ultimately, in any real detail. So I don't recommend the book in the sense of recommending it, full stop because I think it is a book that everyone should read.

'Do you agree with Weininger that the basic nature of woman is unconscious, selfish and absorbed in the process of reproduction whereas the basic nature of man is intelligent, creative, and individual?'

S: Well what does one mean by basic? There is a level of unconsciousness, surely, in every human being. There is also a level of selfishness, that is obvious. Also both men and women are concerned with the process of reproduction, so I don't think one can attribute those things solely to women. But nonetheless it does seem by nature of the part she plays in this process, that woman is somewhat more concerned with it than men. I think one can say that, but perhaps one can emphasise that more than is really necessary.

WOQ/A 85 3 - 4      43

Alright, from Weininger to Robert Spicer.

'Could you explain why you recommend the book 'Ball Breaking' by Robert Spicer?'

Yes, I do recommend this book, I recommend it to men and women alike, but not with total seriousness.

'You have been quoted as saying that the author has insight'

In some respects, yes, that is true.

'To what extent do you feel that he has insight into the nature of the relationships between men and women in the world?'

I think Spicer's insight is in the field, especially, of the meaning and purpose of human life. This is what particularly struck me. One particular chapter struck me as quite, as it were, existential. He is talking about men in particular, in this chapter, and he says that the purpose of life is to live for the sake of something higher. It is for the sake of growth and development. And he makes the point, as far as I remember, that to find a meaning and purpose in life is the most important thing that one can do. Again he is speaking in this chapter specifically with regards to men. So he says that for men the most important thing in life, really, is to find meaning and purpose. I think he brings in the fact that a lot of meaning and purpose nowadays don't come from religion. He has a whole separate chapter on Christianity, he is very, very dismissive indeed of Christianity. So he seems to see man, that is to say, seems to see men, as very often in a situation in which life has no meaning and no purpose, and there is nothing of a deeper metaphysical or spiritual nature to live for. And

it is because of that fact men have a tendency, since they have to live for the sake of something and they don't have anything spiritual to live for, to live for the sake of wife and family. And to put into wife and family that ultimate interest which ought to be put into some, what we would call, spiritual quest or spiritual life. He sees this as a deformation. I don't think he is saying that a man should not look after his wife and children if he has wife and children. I don't think he is saying that, I certainly didn't get that impression. But I think what he was getting at, or what he seemed to be getting at is, that a man should not regard his wife and his children as sort of God substitutes. Do you see what I mean? Should not absolutise them so that they become utterly all important, because it is only, as Buddhists would say, Enlightenment that should occupy that particular position. Or you might say that he is saying that modern man, or the sort of man that he is talking about it, man in affluent Western society, has tended to put his wife and family in the centre of his Mandala, instead of putting a spiritual of human self-development. So it is this, which I was especially interested in and which I felt revealed a certain amount of insight on his part. Then, of course, he goes on to say further that woman tends to take advantage of this fact that man has become dependent for meaning and purpose in his life, dependent on his wife and family, woman takes advantage of this, according to Spicer, to exploit him. And he does cite a number of examples of exploitation of men by women which one can't really deny. But he also says in another Chapter, I forget which one it is, that in the last analysis men and women exploit each other. It is an interlocking sort of thing. And he does, at one point, at least say, that it

WOQ/A 85 3 - 5      44

isn't possible to say who actually started it. It started so far back. One has got man exploiting woman and one has got woman exploiting man. But the way in which woman exploits, or the reason why women is able to exploit man to a certain extent is that he needs her, so to speak, to give meaning to his life. In as much as he isn't able to live for the sake of a spiritual ideal, so he uses woman as a substitute for that, uses a family as a substitute for that. So he sees the solution as man finding a spiritual ideal for which to live and woman likewise, and in that way no longer exploiting each other. But in the course of the book he definitely emphasises woman's exploitation of man much more than he emphasises men's exploitation of woman. I think the reason for that is simple because there is a vast literature nowadays dealing man's exploitation of woman whereas there is hardly anything, as far as I know, about the corresponding exploitation of man by woman. So I see that as meant to redress the balance, it certainly can't be taken as representing the whole truth of the question. This probably answers the next question.

'Do you think he is communicating objectively the true picture of the attitudes and behaviour of most women and men in the world today?'

Yes and no, he does say that he is writing about, I think in the blurb on the back cover of the book, about men and women in our modern, Western, affluent society. For instance, I don't see that what he has to say about women exploiting men holds good of, say, most Indian families. It doesn't seem quite to fit, but it does seem very much to fit middle class families in the affluent West, in Australia certainly, as far as I can see and in Britain and perhaps most of all in America, where a lot of his examples come from. So I recommend it to people mainly for two reasons. I think he does give a quite devastating expose' of the way in which people exploit one another, and in particular the way in which women exploit or can exploit

men. And I think it is quite revealing for both men and women, I think it is revealing and useful in the case of women because they can ask themselves, 'do I actually do this, is this really the way I behave even in a very subtle and indirect way'. If they can honestly say, 'no I don't', fair enough, forget about it. But if you have to admit 'well yes I do sometimes tend to behave in this sort of way', then obviously you do have to do something about it. In the case of the men, if they do find that owing to their lack of commitment to a spiritual goal they lay themselves open to exploitation, to any women who feels like exploiting them, well clearly they have to do something about that in the sense of finding a higher spiritual goal to commit themselves to.

Sanghadevi: (?) He seems to also ( ?) man having a quite different sex drive than woman, and that was also ( ?) the exploitation.

S: I think though, in a sense, I think there are two things. This is generally accepted by psychologists and so on, that the sex drive operates differently in males and females. In the case of the male it would seem there is a greater difficulty of postponement or denial. A male thinks in terms of a short term satisfaction. A woman, the female thinks more in terms of

WOQ/A 85 3 - 6 45

long term satisfaction and even security, for obvious reasons because there is the possibility of offspring there, t?¼~y have to be looked after. So I think very often a man, if he is in a desperate position, so to speak, will do almost anything to get what he wants right when he wants it. And he is then very liable to be exploited by a woman who isn't perhaps as inflamed as he is and who can ( ?) a bit, in terms of what is very good..., she is in a position then to drive a very hard bargain. Do you see what I mean, we all know this is the sort of thing that can happen. Of course woman's bargaining power in modern times has been lost, to some extent, she has lost it with her freedom. And the value that was attached to chastity, formerly, is no longer attached to it and the, what shall I say, the disgrace that was attached to having an illegitimate child is no longer there. So to some extent, woman actually, with freedom, has lost that old fashioned bargaining power, in Western society. And perhaps it's not a bad thing, because it means..., well to use bargaining power in that way, whether you are a man or a woman, means to employ a form of co-ercion and it is the power mode, so perhaps it is a good thing that it has gone to some extent. I think actually, though the book professes to deal more with the exploitation of women by men and does in fact deal much more with the exploitation of women by men, I think its actual critique of men and masculine psychology is much more devastating than its critique of women and feminine psychology. So it is mainly for this reason that I think men should read it. It's quite..., it's horribly written, it is written in a style of English that makes me shudder, but nonetheless it is a very provocative book which, I think, will give one food for thought. When I recommend it to men I say, 'be careful how you read it, don't read it as a criticism of women, you can ignore that part of it, but read it as a critique of masculine attitudes and masculine weaknesses, which are very fully revealed.' So it isn't just recommended to men for the sake of a laugh at the expense of women, or by women for the sake of a laugh at the expense of men. But for the sake of the light that it throws upon one's own possible attitudes and behaviour. So I take the book quite seriously in this sort of way, despite the subliterate way in which it is written.

Vidyasri: How does that relate to what you were saying the other evening, when you were

talking about the importance of literary style and how it revealed character?

S: Yes. Well, he doesn't seem to be an educated man. He seems to be self educated, he is a man who has run bars and cabarets and casinos and so it is probably amazing that he got these ideas down on paper at all. But yes, certainly there is a lack of refinement, there is crudity and so on. But he does make his points in a telling sort of way. But yes, I do think style is very important and I think in....., perhaps if it wasn't written in that sort of style it wouldn't be so effective for some people, or draw their attention to the same extent. But I am sure the same kind of points could be put across in a very much better sort of way, perhaps a more positive way. But perhaps he is trying to make people think... the people who wouldn't normally read what they would regard as a highbrow sort of book. It is a very crudely written, very popular, obviously aimed at a mass market. I don't know how succesful it has been in that respect. We had, in fact, difficulty getting

WOQ/A 85 3 - 7 46

hold of copies. Perhaps it is significant that it comes from Australia. (laughter) Has anybody read it?

Vajrasuri: Why is that significant?

S: Well Australians are usually considered as rather brash, sort of people, rather lacking in refinement. What's that sort of character, what's his name? (V's Bruce) Is it Bruce.

Vajrasuri: Bruce the 'ocker'.

S: Is it Bruce, no there is somebody else, there is that...

V's: Barry, Barry Humphries. Barry Mackenzie.

S: Barry Mackenzie, that's right, yes. He is usually (laughing) regarded as the typical Australian isn't he? Then there is that awful female impersonator, Dame, what's her name?

v's: Edna Everidge.

S: You all know! She is supposed to be a typical example of Australian womanhood!

V: Barry Humphries writes the Barry Mackenzie Thing as well.

S: Is it so, because actually I read or heard somewhere That in this quaint Australian mythology he is her nephew. She has a husband hasn't she?

Vajrasuri: Yes, Norman.

S: Norman (laughter) ( ?)

Vidyasri: But Bhante, when I read the book, I had a lot of different thoughts about it but one train of thought was how much he was basing some of his ideas on fact. Because someone told me the other day that in fact two thirds of all women, I can't remember whether

it was in Britain or where, actually work, work full time.

S: Well this is partly why I said that what he says seems to apply mainly to middle class affluent families, mainly where the woman doesn't go out to work. You remember there is one chapter where he gives a sketch..., it is quite well done actually, but most of the women in that sketch don't work and they pity the women..., I think there is one woman who does a bit of part time work with children and that is really regarded as a bit of a chore. The poor thing she has to do it, sort of thing. So that is the sort of social milieu. that he is really writing about. But clearly, that is why I said it didn't really apply to, say, Indian families, especially working class families, where the woman does go out to work. But again this gives rise to other thoughts I had which may be relevant here. This also goes back to, in a way, the Victorian period. This is something I have been wanting to mention for some time but it didn't seem to come in appropriately. I think the source for a lot of trouble is the idea of the 'lady'. Do you know what I mean? It's as though 'the lady', or the idea of the lady has come to be regarded as the ideal, almost, for women. The lady is the ideal woman. And of course one of the

WOQ/A 85 3 - 8 47

characteristics of the lady is that she doesn't work. In the Victorian period of course she had lots and lots of servants and men were very polite and very respectful and chivalrous, always kissing her hand and opening doors for her and seeing her into her carriage and escorting her. And of course she was absolutely pure and angelical and all the rest of it. So I think, this idea of the lady, does persist to some extent. And I think to the extent that women try to be ladies, rather than just human beings and women, I think they limit themselves. I think that the sort of women that Robert Spicer has in mind are women in this sort of tradition of ladies. They are not ladies quite in the Victorian sense, they swear and they smoke cigarettes which ladies don't really do, but it is, in a way, the same sort of idea. A sort of living at home, not having to really do any work, certainly not go out to work, and be supported by the husband and looked up to by him and idolised by him and regarded by him as being just a rather silly, feather headed little thing and all that kind of thing. And of ornamental value, rather than of real use. But this idea of the lady is still quite influential in many circles. It is regarded by, I think a lot of people, almost as a sort of ideal for women. Do you see what I am gettin~at? (V's Yes)

Padmasuri: Is this an ideal for women by men or ...

S: I think it is both.

Marichi: Isn't it just the ideal of someone in a protected situation. You get it in high caste Indian families, it's presumably the longing for someone not to work, because they are working so hard.

S: But in the case of the 'lady' in Western tradition, she assumes certain characteristics. In England you get it, say, in prosperous circles, she almost assumes the character of the Virgin Mary. Do you see what I mean? She is a mother, yes, but the whole sexual side of her personality, in the Victorian period, is just obliterated. The mother, the pure mother, the pure woman and you get..., for instance I have been reading a bit of Victorian literature recently. It's amazing the extent to which the woman, well the middle class woman, the lady, was

protected and sheltered. And the extent to which she was deferred to socially by men, that didn't mean she had necessarily any real influence. For instance, you never contradicted a lady, you never refused to carry out a ladies wishes, you always deferred to a lady socially. If she wanted to go for a walk, that was that, if she wanted to go for a drive, that was that. You were absolutely at her disposal. But of course, very often in the really important issues of life, for instance marriage, disposal of property, money, she had no say at all. Do you see what I mean? I think that there is a lingering influence, still, and maybe it is one of the things, basically, that Robert Spicer is getting at, IS woman as lady. As supported and cherished and in a way not allowed to be a real individual.

Vidyasri: I can see that but I did think that it was significant that..., looking at numbers of two thirds of women working, that actually it was a smaller proportion that wasn't and some of them might actually be quite full time engaged looking after children and so on. So I was struck that although he was generalising that this seemed to be most women, I could see that it was some women, but I wondered whether it was in fact....

WOQ/A 85 3 - 9 48

S: I think what he means, or what he should have meant, was most women in that particular band of social life. Because the back cover blurb does make that point, but in the body of the book he does very often speak of all women as though he was referring to all the women in the world. But clearly that would be very much an over generalisation, it wouldn't apply to most women in Asia, it wouldn't apply to working class women who are going out to work. I think his strictures do very much apply to that comfortably off, affluent, middle class, social strata.

Marichi: It just seemed very old fashioned in a way, because it seemed to be something that might have been like that twenty years ago. Things have changed tremendously.

S: I don't think altogether..., I myself have sometimes been shocked..., he has got a chapter on divorce settlements and I have seen cases like that reported in the papers, where it seems that the settlement is grossly unfair to the man. For instance in some cases the marriage had lasted two years and perhaps the man is working ten, fifteen years before the marriage, but when divorce occurs then the woman, the ex-wife gets half of his entire savings and property. And that doesn't seem fair, and things like that one does still come across and it is these sort of things that he is basing himself on.

Marichi: Well English law has changed. That seems to be ?) Engl~sh law has changed.

S: Yes. America, I did know of a case where a woman got married with the idea that after two years she would be divorced and take as much money as she could. It is possible, certainly under American law. I don't know about Australian law. But I think the main point he has made, if one boils it down to the absolute main point, that no self respecting person whether male or female, will live by exploiting somebody else. In this particular context someone of the opposite sex, I think this is the main point. And he does appeal in one of the later chapters to both men and women to stop exploiting each other and live more as individuals. But certainly what he says doesn't apply to the situation where a woman is working and equally supporting the family. He does, of course, make the point, and I think I

have made this point myself some years ago. That most women really have two options, either to work for a career, support themselves or to marry and allow themselves to be supported, and live at home and bring up children. Whereas in the case of a man, there is no such option, no-one is going to support him. Occasionally nowadays the odd woman does support the odd man but it is still a very exceptional pattern. A man has got to work, unless he can live on the dole of course.

Sridevi: I think also that men tend to forget that if that has been agreed when they marry, that the woman spends her energy looking after the man's needs and the children, so she does contribute; if not in money but in energy and time.

S: But nowadays of course suppose there are no children. Think if one takes the extreme case one has got the pampered wife living at home, no children. Maybe there are not servants but there are all sorts of labour saving devices, she doesn't have to work in the way that he does. (S: That's different)

WOQ/A 85 3 - 10 49

And even sometimes if there are only one or two children, well looking after them at home, although true quite demanding isn't quite the same thing as going out into the world with all the wear and tear that involves.

Marichi: I think this is a very old fashioned and limited view. There are a few women who do, but very, very few and (?) these days are getting married, they are not stopping work unless they are about to have children. And speaking from my own point of view as a mother, it is an extremely tiring job. It is more tiring than anything I have ever done, and I have done some quite hard work. And the thought of trying to support a husband as well in that situation, looking (laughter drowns words) is quite appalling. And if there was more than one child, I am very, very impressed by women with more than one child.

Sanghadevi: But at the same time, I don't think we are in contact with the sort of women that he is talking about. Personally I do think these women exist, and I agree this influences things.

Marichi: I know they exist but I do think in a very limited number.

S: Well perhaps they exist in different numbers in different societies. Probably you would find that there was a greater proportion of such women in America than anywhere else in the world. And probably, I suspect, quite a high proportion in, say, Germany and France.

V: And South Africa.

S: And South Africa and Australia. But a very low proportion Th India and perhaps a lower proportion in this country than in the States.

V: Do Indian women work, generally?

S: Very low caste women work if they can possibly get work.

V: Yes, low caste but apart from those?

S: It's very badly paid work, it is usually labouring work.

V: But apart from low caste women, I always assumed That in India. ...

S: No, higher caste women would not work. The ideal there Th in a way to be a lady, very much so. Perhaps to a greater extent than in the West. That is regarded..., even the lower caste women would regard that as the ideal. If their husbands starting earning more money, the first thing the woman would do would be to stop working. The next thing she would do would be to get a servant girl. Not simply to do work, but as a sign of prestige and all that.

V: It is a mutual reinforcing thing, isn't it. FS: it is) because many men do not want their wives to go out to work, actually.

WOQ/A 85 3 - 11

50

S: Yes, because their status, also, is involved.

V: And they need someone to iron their shirts.

S: Yes, right. So one of the things that Robert Spicer is getting at, as regards men, is don't do this. Don't adopt this sort of attitude, you are laying yourself ( ?) for exploitation. In this little dramatic sketch he shows this in a quite ludicrous sort of way. But when you read the papers, you get the impression that for a lot of people, they have got a majority..., regardless of how they live this is a sort of ideal. That the woman should live in this sort of way. It is almost desirable, if you are not living in this sort of way it is because you are too poor and you are unlucky. It is glamorous to live in this other sort of way, to live like a lady. And a lot of men would like to have their wife living like a lady because it means that they are gentlemen, as it were, they can afford to keep them in that sort of way.

Parami: I think that is one of the things that feminism is actually trying to smash a bit, as well, actually. Because it is not very dignified for a woman to be in that position either. So from that point of view.

S: This is what he says, yes, it isn't really consistent with being an individual. So who has read the book?

Jayaprabha: It is not very easily available at the moment. It has run out. Australia is

V: I borrowed mine from Kulamitra.

S: Those of the three of you who have read it, do you feel That it was useful to read it?

Vidyasri: I did find it useful but I found it had quite a strong effect on me in a positive way. It has made me look more at the point of view of man, and it has been quite refreshing to see

completely the other side put. Because usually you do see the side of women being oppressed by men. It has made me feel very grateful that I have come across the Dharma and that I do have a meaning in my life over and above being associated with either of those modes of being. But at the same time I found quite a lot of his actual examples and facts unsubstantiated and very crudely and sometimes quite negatively written. But the overall effect I found quite positive.

S: Marichi?

(end of side 1)

Marichi: I was quite familiar with these ( ?) since I read Betty (Freedman ?) Feminine Mystique twenty years ago. ( ?) Betty Freedman particularly makes those point quite well. I can't remember if she aims.., points to a higher dimension. And I feel like I have spent most of my life trying not to exploit anybody, including cv'en in sexual relationships. And I was rather disgusted that men in the Friends seem to feel that women in the Friends might do this. I could see the value in it if people think about it more clearly.

WOQ/A 85 3 - 12 51

S: Do you think that men in the Friends read the book mainly as a critique of women?

V's Yes, quite few.

S: Ahh, because when I recommended the book, to certain people, I said quite clearly 'don't take too much notice of what it says about women, but take a lot of notice of what it says about men .

Marichi: I expect that it was a revelation to men, because they haven't ( ?) it ever, because they felt ( ?) Also I dislike his style of writing intensely. (S: Yes of course) But I thought that he did make good points, particularly towards the end. And I think it is a shame that ( ?) mens literature better than t hat and sort of take account of what women have been trying to do for years.

S: Yes, I don't think he was, as it were, trying to be fair, Th the sense of making a survey of literature and what had been written. He was just writing from his own experience, he seems to be a quite non-literary person, perhaps he doesn't read anything at all except for Playboy magazine, something like that, that is the impression one gets.

Marichi: I suppose I just became angry because it did seem crude and I just felt ( ?) about twenty years. I felt there is more to say than this, but it is obviously a good beginning.

S: Sanghadevi?

Sanghadevi: Well I found the style crude, but actually, like Vidyasri I found it quite refreshing. Because I've ( ?) again and again talking about women's oppression, I've never felt that was a true story and in a way I felt that this was going to the other extreme. But in a

way, yes I did find it refreshing and I did notice that he did say a few positive things as well. He did say about women who have started to take on careers, a new generation of women, and I did notice that. He did talk about what can you do to bring up children trying to learn to respect each other. I must say, yes, I enjoyed it. But I did think it was the sort of book that a feminist would probably throw away in disgust and I thought perhaps a weak woman might feel completely devastated by it. I also thought that it was the sort of book that men would probably read more seeing what it said about women than themselves.

S: Well, admitted that the cover does say that. But actually, Vfelt after reading it, especially after I read it the second time going through it carefully that actually it was concerned more about men than about women, and for that reason men, perhaps, needed more to read it.

Marichi: I am willing to read it again in a more moderate mood (laughter)

S: Well the first time I read it I just skipped through it because it was sent to me by Buddhadasa from New Zealand. It was given to him and recommended to him by a woman Mitra. That's

WOQ/A 85 3 - 13 52

how he came to know about it.

(Confused voices.)

S: . . . that he read it, but he did and he thought it a good book and thought I would be interested in reading it so sent it to me. So the first time I whipped through it and the second time I read it quite carefully, and discriminatingly, and I think I was more impressed by it the second time though there was more that I disagreed with the second time. But I thought, considering his background, the sort of way of life that he was leading, with no contact with philosophic thought, or anything of that sort. I thought it was quite amazing some of the insight that he had arrived at. I certainly gave more weight to those. There are some things that I brushed aside and didn't take too much notice of. But I think, perhaps, it is always good to read a book that one violently disagrees with, because you shouldn't always read things that you agree with. So I think if a feminist is tempted to throw it out of the window then it is the very book she should read. Because if there is anything in what the feminist has to say then there must be a rational answer to the points that he makes. If one throws something out of the window it suggests that you are not in a position to find a rational answer. Anyway, there are one or two more questions on this, we are not getting off so lightly.

'Robert Spicer sees men as oppressed and manipulated by women. Many women feel themselves to be oppressed and used by men. Do you think that one attitude has more truth in it than the other?

S: I think it is very difficult to say. I think if someone Vs exploited by another they very often go halfway towards the exploitation. So I tend to think that exploitation or oppression, except in the most obvious examples, is very often mutual. So I wouldn't say that men were

more oppressed by women than women were oppressed by men, I wouldn't say that. I think it would be very difficult to say who is more oppressed by whom. No doubt it differs in different societies.

'You seem to recommend that women do not read feminist literature or get too involved in exploring relationships between men and women, however you seem to recommend and encourage men to do so. Why is this? Do you feel it is more helpful for men to do this than for women?

S: No, the only book I have recommended to men apart from Men and Friendship which is a rather different sort of book, is this particular one by Robert Spicer. I don't habitually recommend this sort of literature to men, in any case there is hardly any of this literature. 'You seem to recommend that women do not read feminist literature'. I really sometimes wonder whether it is a good thing for women to read at least some kinds of feminist literature. Certainly the extreme kind, I am not happy about that. But also I think, what I am more concerned about within the context of the FWBO is that women do not identify themselves exclusively as women, nor men identify themselves exclusively as men. And I have the same sort of feelings about the gay movement, whether the male or the female wing of it, where people identify themselves as gay, as though that is their total identity. So I think an excessive reading of feminist literature will

WOQ/A 85 3 - 14 53

encourage women to think of themselves as women and nothing but women and I think that gets in the way of spiritual development. Also I think some of the feminist literature is rather weak, I have read a little bit of it. I've read for instance 'The Feminine Mystique', 'The Female Eunuch', 'Sexual Politics' and several others. I read recently 'The Way of all Women', which was recommended to me by Joan Karmen because I had heard that a lot of women in the movement got a lot from it. I was really surprised because it seemed to me very weak, and very old fashioned.

Parami: It's not feminist, she's not feminist, she's definitely not feminist.

S: You wouldn't regard her as a feminist?

Parami: Definitely not, anything but.

S: Ohh, what is she then.

Parami: Psychologist, she is a Jungian psychologist. A lot of her attitudes, I think, would find a very short shrift with most women.

S: Perhaps she is just a ( ) feminist. What she did seem to stand up for women and have quite a high opinion of them.

Parami: She might be feminist with a small 'f' rather than Feminist with a big 'F'

S: I should jolly well hope so, but even so she did seem to me weak and she seems

to see men through a rose coloured cloud. A sort of distant figure, right over there. I really wondered whether she had ever met a man, actually, the way that she was writing. But no, I don't recommend to read, at least too much feminist literature just from this point of view, that I think encourages them to think about themselves just as women, and just be concerned with themselves as women. Clearly they have got to take that into consideration, because they are women, but that is not the whole of the story, they are female human beings.

vidyasri: But do you think that there is a phase in a person's life, either male or female, in which if they haven't fully acknowledged or accepted their sex, that they might have to go through a phase of discovering it and finding out more about it. And in a way having a more positive.

S: Well every woman knows she is a woman.

(Confusion of voices)

S: That's why you are here.

Vidyasri: But Bhante I have heard you encourage men to be men.

S: Yes, this is true, but I also encourage women to be women. But I have to be more careful about doing that because some women react to being encouraged to be women, because they have got the

WOQ/A 85 3 - 15 54

wrong idea of women. They think when you say woman, you mean lady, sometimes. They don't like that. I doubt really whether feminist literature helps a woman to realise the fact that she is a woman in that sense. Because some feminist literature seems to suggest that you ought to rebel against being a woman altogether, and consider yourself some sort of neuter, some sort of abstract human being. Forgetting about your womanliness, or your femininity altogether. Some feminists seem to treat that as a masculine invention. So I think some feminists encourage women almost to be alienated from their femininity. But certainly, yes, I would say that every human being is either male or female in one degree or the other and they have to acknowledge that. And it is true that some people find that difficult, whether men or women and they have to be encouraged to recognise and acknowledge that aspect, or that side, or that part of themselves. But I doubt whether feminist literature will help women do this very much.

V: I sometimes wonder whether reading too many of these kinds of books constitutes shopping around. You keep looking for the answer outside the movement somewhere.

S: Yes, there is that too. I mean, supposing for the sake of argument a woman isn't able, sufficiently, to recognise and accept that she is a woman, well what will help her to do that?

V: Single sex situations.

S: I think probably a single sex situation and being in contact with women who do fully accept the fact that they are women as well as being individuals.

Parami: I think one of the things that a certain amount of feminist literature can do in the way of helping people, possibly either before they have come into contact with the Dharma or maybe in quite early stages, is to help you see your conditioning in a certain kind of way. And I think that has helped a number of women who are now quite involved in the Friends, who maybe don't explore feminism any more, but have in the past used that as a tool to explore their own conditioning.

S: Yes, it's true that people come to the FWBO in all sorts of ways. So it doesn't really matter provided they do find their way to our door. But once they have found us I think there are better ways of doing things than, say, through feminism or through Marxism or through whatever else might have brought them.

Parami: I would agree with that but I do think some..., for some people the conditioning that one accumulates through one's gender or sex is quite strong and quite unconscious, well of course it is. Sometimes even when you meditate and even when you are in single sex situations you do also need something else, in the same sort of way; as maybe Ball Breaker helps, shock some men into seeing certain aspects of their conditioning. I do think some feminist literature helps shock some women in the same sort of way, and gives them leverage. I think once that has happened maybe there is no need to continue with it. I do think it can be helpful sometimes.

S: I must say I feel a bit surprised when women who are

WOQ/A 85 3 - 16 55

involved in the FWBO seem to read a lot of feminist literature.

Parami: I suppose it depends what you mean by feminist literature. Because I am not quite sure what you mean, because I possibly read some things that you would consider feminist, I don't know. I read quite catholically and I do quite like to read what is current thinking in the world as well.

S: If someone is a big reader, say, like I am, well perhaps if you read four or five books on feminism that's not much because you read four or five hundred books in the course of a year. But if you read very little and you are not even reading the sutras but your main reading is feminist literature, then I think probably there is something wrong.

Parami: Well I think that's true, yes.

S: Also I get the impression from some of the feminist literature that I have read that there is sometimes a not very healthy attitude inculcated. To take a very extreme example, the Valeri Solanas Manifesto, is it? (V: yes) Which is usually called 'Cutting up Men'. But it is said in matter of fact that SCWA does not in fact mean that, but anyway, the manifesto itself is simply trying to be violent. But, to go back to this, what surprised me was when this was set up by Windhorse Typesetters, was it two or three years ago.

Perhaps I had better fill you in in case you haven't read this manifesto. It is by Valerie Solanas, ~is she sort of, a founder of feminism in the States would she be regarded as? (V's No) Well anyone she is quite a common figure, relatively well known.

Parami: She is a rather eccentrically prominent figure.

S: But anyway it is quite a diatribe against men, and she seriously suggests that women should actually kill men, and also that they should hate them. It is a very, very virulent diatribe, I have never read anything like it in any literature, it's absolutely virulent; and it is hardly in accordance with Buddhist principles! But anyway, a feminist group, I think it was in Hackney, decided that it would be a good idea to reprint this and distribute it because they agreed with its ideas and in the preface, they state this specifically, that they agreed with the idea of killing men, and that this idea should be inculcated among women. So they happened to know Windhorse Photosetters and they gave it them. It somehow or other.., a copy of this, before it was actually printed ended up on my desk, I don't know how. But I was rather surprised that Windhorse Photosetter s were actually doing this particular piece of work because I felt we shouldn't be doing something like that. So I asked some-one to talk to the young lady who had actually set it up in Windhorse Photosetter S and he asked her 'did you read it, did you realise what it was?' And she said, 'oh yes', so they said 'well it is a very extreme kind of feminist literature and it is advocating killing men, do you think we ought to be printing that sort of thing'. So she said, 'I thought it would be all right'. So then he said, 'supposing a man had come along and asked you to set a booklet strongly advocating raping women, would you have thought it alright?' So she said 'no of course not!' So then one saw this double standard, and I wasn't happy about that. So there are these sorts of groups with these sorts

WOQ/A 85 3 - 17 56

of ideas and producing, apparantly, this sort of literature. And also, it struck me, that this woman who was a Mitra was not clear about that particular issue, she seemed to think it was quite alright that this sort of material should be Put into circulation. That is why I wonder what sort of effect the reading of feminist literature, even of a milder kind, does really have.

Vidyasri: Bhante, can I just say that however that was communi- cated back to you that wasn't the full picture because I was there when we began setting that text. When we accepted the text I had no idea what SCUM stood for, I thought it was going to be a text about vegetation (laughter) I actually started...

S: Well that's fair enough but the woman who did actually set it up did say that she knew what it was about.

Parami: She didn't

Vidyasri: None of us had known what it was beforehand, they hadn't told us and we hadn't thought to ask. In fact the preface wasn't set until the end, anyway, so it wasn't as if we began with that. We began with the text, which I started typesetting and as time went on I started

thinking, 'my gosh; what is this we are typesetting!' But we were in a very difficult position because we had accepted the work and taken it on, had started typesetting it. I hadn't even looked at it before I put it on the machine and we were very short of money and very short of work. We didn't..., we at no time felt happy about doing it, we had a lot of conflict.

S: But certainly one particular Mitra was asked and this is what she did say as reported back to me.

Vidyasri: Well I am surprised.

S: That she didn't think it really mattered.

Parami: I am very surprised ( ?) I was living with a couple of those people at that time and my memory of it was that they were in a lot of conflict about it and felt extremely unhappy.

S: I think this was probably some time later.

Parami: No, but I mean I knew all of them. My memory is quite clear about that, actually, because it was a big thing.

S: Well there shouldn't even have been any conflict, because one just shouldn't have..., if one knew what was in it, maybe if you didn't know that is a different matter, but if you did know what was in it there shouldn't have been any conflict.

Parami: There wasn't a conflict in that..., the conflict was that they had already started doing the work, they had already started typing the work and they were in quite a difficult position as to whether they should send the work back and forgo the money and also lose a customer that they might have dealt with before, as far as I remember. It certainly wasn't as simplistic as it seems to have been conveyed back to you.

S: I heard at that time only about the reactions of that

WOQ/A 85 3 - 18 57

particular Mitra that I was under the impression had been mainly responsible for actually doing the work and had actually seen most of what was in the text. I did ask someone to interview and ask her why she did it and what she felt about it. And she did actually say, as it was brought back to me, and I think faithfully, that she didn't think it mattered.

Parami: Well I am very surprised because none of those women said that at the time or were in any way blasé about it. I personally distinctly remember them all being quite strongly..., certainly when they became aware of what they were typing they were not at all happy about it. Also my memory of the book, which I saw when it was finished which I saw in a bookshop in Islington by accident, I was interested in it because I had heard all the fuss about it so I had a look. I was a bit shocked I must say, but my memory is that the preface actually said, or that an introduction actually said, we don't agree, necessarily, with the views but we

feel that it is an important enough piece of something or another, to reprint. But my memory of it was that there was a sort of (rider ?) in it saying that they didn't necessarily agree with it.

S: I still have a copy of it, but I certainly found in the preface that I had that they were publishing it because they did in fact support the ideas. I think they might have, perhaps, had reservations about certain minor points but on the whole they certainly felt that it should be put into circulation.

Parami: I thought the minor parts, mainly was that they weren't sure about this actually killing people. ( ?) S: Well the fact that they just weren't sure about it says quite a lot doesn't it.' But this illustrates why I am not very happy about people immersing themselves in literature which doesn't have, though this is an extreme example, a very positive sort of effect on them; inculcate a very positive outlook.

Parami: I don't think anybody in the Movement would read that.

S: No, that is very extreme. But there is a diluted version of that in some feminist literature. One picks up this even from feminists who come along to our classes and meetings. Sometimes they are quite extreme and quite reactive, as you know. So on the whole I would say if you are a great reader and just read feminist literature as well as reading other things, well fair enough, it will probably balance out. But especially if you are a Mitra and you don't have much time for reading and you don't have much time for study, well there are other things that are far more important and far more helpful, even to you as a woman, than this literature. Anyway we still haven't finished, we are only half-way through.

'The other day you said that traditionally Buddhism says that a stream of consciousness is attracted to a female body because it is more involved with reproduction and 'small trivial matters

S I think one would have to say just more involved with reproduction, I think the small trivial matters is social rather than biological.

'Given this tendency, once a woman has Gone for Refuge. do you feel it is likely that, although no longer particularly involved with reproduction she will tend to work in a smaller

WOQ/A 85 3 - 19 58

sphere and it will tend to be men who work in wider spheres?'

S: Not necessarily, no. If the more restricted sphere is directly connected with the biological conditioning, then if you transcend the biological conditioning at least to some extent, why should you~restricted in your sphere of operation. Except, perhaps, for purely practical, objective reasons. Do you see what I mean? So T see no reason why a woman or women working together shouldn't work in a wider sphere, whatever one means by that. What would be a wider sphere?

V: Well ( ?) setting up a centre, having a sort of overall....

S: Overall view of things or overall responsibility (V: Yes) Well we have got two women Order Members setting up centres single handed already. No, so I don't see why a woman who has developed more as an individual and gone for Refuge should not work in a wider sphere. I would have thought a wider sphere meant going out more into the world and representing the Movement perhaps, to people who weren't Buddhist or weren't connected with the FWBO. ( ) of a wider sphere as meaning right outside the structure of the FWBO altogether.

'From your experience (your is underlined) of men and women in the Movement do you think it is generally true that women are more concerned with small minutiae and trivial matters? If so does any particular practice strike you as especially counteracting this tendency? Or can it be developed as a strength?'

S: I think there is a difference between being concerned with Watters of detail and being concerned with trivial things. If you spend a couple of hours trying out different kinds of face powder and wondering which one to use, well I say that is trivial. But if you are working in accounts you have to pay very close attention to detail, that is not trivial. Some people have the kind of mind that enables them to concentrate on detail, others don' t. It is said that women are very often better at detail than men, but in many areas you require not only attention to detail, you also require attention to the broader context within which the details exist. As with, say, accounts. In the case of a treasurer, it is not enough that he is a good book keeper, he has got to do a lot of forward planning as regards the financial management of his co-op or his centre. So he has got to take a much broader view, or she has got to take a much broader view. Do you see what I mean? So I think attention to detail is very often essential to the success of any undertaking, whatever it may be. Whether that undertaking involves men or women. But preoccupation with trivia is quite another matter. I think we have to try and cultivate the ability, if we can, to be concerned not only with the broad overall view of things, but also all the details which are necessary for carrying out that particular thing or that particular project. So I don't think there is any particular practice to counter- act this tendency, taking tendency to mean tendency to trivialise or be concerned with trivia, otherwise than involvement in the spiritual life itself. That will automatically take one away from trivial things, but it will not take one away from detail, detail is still important and necessary, attention to detail.

WOQ/A 85 3 - 20 59

You can't pay attention to detail without mindfulness, obviously.

'In the Sutra of Golden Light seminar, you mention that women in the Movement, including Order Members, have no or very little contact with the transcendental. Do oU still think this, if so is it important for women to have contact with men who have this vision?'

S: If one speaks of contact with the transcendental, what exactly is one..., I don't think I ever speak of contact with the transcendental in this context. I might speak in terms of a sense of the transcendental, because I think I have sometimes said in connection with people's readiness for Ordination, that there needs to be some sense of the transcendental. Which

doesn't mean, necessarily that you are in direct contact with it or have actual experience of it, but you have got ~om~ feeling, as it were, not just an abstract idea, that there is such a thing, such a dimension as the transcendental, even though you aren't yourself as yet in direct contact with it. It's as though you can see it through a thick mist, there is just a glimmer of light coming through, from which you infer the existence of a transcendental dimension behind that mist. So I think of it more as a sense, in the case of most people. If it developed into an actual vision, contact, obviously so much the better.

Vajrasuri: Well at most a direct experience with the visualisation experience, a direct practice, rather.

S: Well in a way everything one does conduces to that, but perhaps for most people it is in connection with meditation. Any kind of insight practice, including a visualisation, which includes insight, which brings them nearest to it, or in connection with which they are most likely to have that kind of experience. They could have it in connection with study, especially if you were studying a text of, say, the perfection of wisdom or ( ? ) sutra. But the question is, 'you mentioned women in the Movement, including Order Members, have no or very little contact with the transcendental'. I don't think I meant to suggest that women didn't have it whereas men did. 'Do you still think this?' Well I think within the Movement generally, especially within the Order, I think there is a greater sense, at least, of the transcendental than there was even a few years ago. I think one can say that, just because of the general growth of people within the Order. As for 'it being important for women to have contact with men who do have this vision?', the word is changed there, well if there are men who definitely have this vision, yes it would be a good thing to have contact with them. Because clearly there wouldn't be any danger, in the case of such a man, of any undesirable development. But then again one has to be quite careful because you may be projecting a lot onto a man and you might think he has got tremendous vision and insight and all that sort of thing whereas he may be a good speaker or have an attractive charming appearance, and charisma, and maybe he ( for that and you are tending to idealise him. So I think one has to be careful. And women will develop vision too if they stick at their practice. So I think one needs to be quite careful not to look to men, even, for that element of vision. Yes if they do have it and you are in contact with them, well fair enough, but I think

WOQ/A 85 3 - 21 / 4-- 60

one should be very careful not to get into a habit of looking to men for that, as though women not only don't have it but can't have it. I think one has got to emphasise developing it oneself.

(End tape 3)

'Do you feel that the women Order Members work well with the Women Mitras? Do you think we do give the right sort of contact that is needed to help people develop~ Are there any tendencies you have noticed in our interaction with Mitras that are unhelpful?'

S: Yes, in a sense, I do feel that women Order Members work Well with the women Mitras in the sense that they are very conscientious. They give a lot of time and they are quite systematic and in some ways they are more systematic than the men Order Members. But

whether it is the right sort of contact, I think this is quite a point. I think later on a question raises this question of 'spark', and I think sometimes 'spark' is missing. I think I am going to be asked what I mean by spark. One thing I was thinking the other day because people were asking me whether there is any difference between men's study groups and women's. One of the things that did occur to me afterwards is that men seem to have more enthusiasm for ideas. Do you see what I mean? And that can be very energising, and that can be part of this spark that I mentioned. Women are very conscientious, they seemed to study things closely, they examine it, they go into it in detail, they try hard to understand it, but they don't seem to have the same enthusiasm for ideas. For instance, sometimes in men's study groups, especially with certain men Order Members at present, I make some new point and they are so enthusiastic about it, it is a real discovery. They really want to hear more, they are so eager, so excited. I don't think I have ever felt, or found this with women. Perhaps they are excited deep down, but they don't actually show it.

Parami: Have you made any new comments? Do you feel that you do sometimes make new comments that are not picked up.

S: I do sometimes, yes. I do sometimes. I think when I had that last seminar with a few of you I was asked when I got back to Padmaloka by Subhuti, of course he was interested from the point of view of Mitrata. Where any new points made, did you bring up any new points. I said 'yes there were some new points' I can't remember now what they were, but I do remember that there were new points. But some men at least seem to have tremendous enthusiasm for ideas, but it doesn't seem like that at least with most of the women that I have..., well not with really any, to be quite honest, any of the women that I am actually in contact with. Do you see what I mean? And this seems to me part of the spark, that women don't get excited about ideas. Sometimes men carry it to extremes and the ideas run away with them but that is just going to extremes.

Parami: In the question and answer sessions that you did with the study group leaders. I had the impression it was just supposed to be questions and answers rather than discursive, if you see what I mean. Which might have been my misunderstanding.

WOQ/A 85 4 - 2 61

S: I think, yes, one should cover the material but I am always quite happy if we go a little bit off the track and explore some new aspect. Even if it isn't exactly in the text. Because I am quite able, since I have had so much experience of these things, to bring back the discussion to the text when I feel it is necessary. So I don't mind allowing myself to go a bit astray, as it were, off the actual text even, if some important point arises. Why suppress it, why not explore it. I certainly find that more interesting anyway and others no doubt do too.

Maybe women are a bit timid about deviating from the beaten track. But even so that wouldn't entirely explain this absence of excitement and enthusiasm about ideas. You see what I am getting at?. So, I am not sure how this is to be cultivated. But one has got to have interest in ideas. Not in an abstract way, the ideas have got to be related to life, especially spiritual life, obviously.

V: Bhante, it might be a silly question, but what do you exactly mean by ideas, interest in ideas? Could you elaborate.

S: I mean by ideas, ideas of a more philosophical order. Questions connected with..., well

not just the nature of existence but new angles on things, new ways of looking at things. Discovering new areas of thought, of relationships between one thing and another. New light on say..., a new connection. A novel connection, say, between things with which you are already familiar, but which you hadn't realised were connected in that particular way. Or fresh light on something that you thought you had understood but now you see in a completely different way. This is what excites people like Subhuti and Nagabodhi and Devamitra and a few others. Not all the men, by any means, but certainly a handful, and that can be very stimulating in a study group.

Marichi: I think there are quite a few women who are excited by that but maybe we don't find means of expressing it (

Parami: I think there are.

ThE-dasri: I think there are.

S: Well sometimes in the men's study group you notice that there are men who are excited, you can see that, but they don't have anything to say. But there are also three or four, sometimes, at least, who are not only excited but express it in a very articulate way and can ask me further questions and even press me a bit,

Parami: I wonder if some of that comes about..., I mean I don't deny your point I have noticed that with those particular men as well. I wonder if some of it comes about with being familiar with you, as well, to a certain extent. I think I feel slightly inhibited sometimes at getting excited and trying to come in on something, maybe in a way because I am not so used to you.

S: Well as regards, say, Subhuti, because he is the most prominent example, he has always been like that. And actually to begin with, when he first came to Padmaloka he was quite shy of me. Much more so than many women are, it is in a way quite strange, but he was. He has got over now, but at that time he

WOQ/A 85 4 - 3 62

was quite shy, but nonetheless his enthusiasm..., he forget his shyness on those sort of occasions, in those sort of situations. Perhaps it is easier to say that women's minds work in a different way, but I am a bit cautious about saying that.

Jayaprabha: Bhante, do you think it is because we haven't, as a whole, studied enough?

S: It could be that.

Jayaprabha: Because I think people do get excited about ideas but it is quite hard. I am aware, say, on this study, that I haven't really studied enough to be able to really think in that way. I am aware that one needs to study for quite a long time in certain areas.

S: Yes, making another point I know there are a few very Young men Order Members and Mitras who get excited about ideas and who have ideas, but since they are so young and inexperienced the ideas are not connected with facts or experience And are completely

unrealistic and can't even be discussed, do you see what I mean? So you need both. You need a certain amount of factual knowledge, a certain knowledge of the subject before you can think, really, of getting ideas, or new ideas on that particular subject matter.

Vidyasri: And do you think this connects with our interaction with the women Mitras?

S: ( The question asks whether I have noticed anything in our interaction with Mitras that are unhelpful. Well I don't actually see you interacting with them, so I don't really know.

But I hear that some women Mitras find the study groups quite dull. So perhaps there is something in that.

Sanghadevi: I'd be interested to know who those people are because certainly at the LBC, I'd say that we put a lot of energy into study groups since we have started through the course. The whole quality has gone up, and I think in fairness to both sides it's been.., both Order Members and Mitras have been putting a lot more preparation and effort into the study. The Mitras have had to work. And we have had to work them quite hard to get questions out of them.

S: Of course they haven't done much study. There a lot of men who haven't done all that much study but at least there is a handful who have and they usually take a prominent part in these sort of discussions. But again as I mentioned the other day one has got to be interested in the general issues involved, anyway, not just think about them when the time for study comes. They have got to be things which you have been thinking about anyway, whether you took study groups or not.

Jayaprabha: Do you think that is something you develop through study, thinking in that way? Or is it something that you have these questions and then you go to study?

S: I think it is very difficult to tell which it is, where it starts. Some people definitely have questions first, they

WOQ/A 85 4 - 4 63

think a lot, they don't read much, maybe they don't read at all and as a result of their own thinking they come up with some of the questions which the great philosophers have asked. Then they read the great philosophers. But others read the great philosophers and then they start thinking. You get both types of people.

Samata: Does it have anything to do with the size of a study group? Because I have noticed in the LBC study groups, it started off, the one I was in quite large - about fourteen, and it ended up being four or five. And it was quite a revelation what it was when it was four or five because the communication was totally different.

S: Yes, I think it is, I think there is no doubt about that. Some people have been finding that one to one study is very good and very stimulating, so perhaps one needs to experiment a bit with different size study groups.

Parami: Bhante, are you suggesting that this lack of spark, for want of a better term, that

it's perhaps (disturbing ?) study, it's also there in more general communication, perhaps?

S: Perhaps it is. This has recently been suggested by others, 7 is perhaps so.

Parami: Because study groups are have only, in a way, been part of a whole...

S: It's a special situation, yes.

Parami: ... maybe highlights certain things.

S: For instance, it is very difficult to say very much, in a way, because one doesn't want to seem to say that women should stop being women and be men. Women should, in a way, stop being women and be individuals. But one hesitates to suggest, this is the way the men are and therefore the women ought to be like that too. Do you see what I mean? Maybe one can't help feeling sometimes that maybe they function in a different sort of way. So one doesn't want to insist that they do things the way the men do them, as if that was the norm, it is more doing things in the way that is appropriate to an individual.

Parami: Also, you have already mentioned, it seems to be four particular men who work in that particular way, out of one hundred and ninety Order Members. So it's another completely general ( ?)

Samata: If in a way it comes from interest in doing what we really engage in, should we be encouraging women to follow those things. Things like, with my question about co-ops. What I was trying to get at was, in a way it can be very good when you come along, you want to work in a co-op, and you do that and then there comes a time when, well I felt for myself by leaving and following an interest I had, that made a great change in me. And I wonder, obviously I want to see more Mitras be ordained, I am just wondering if in a way that is better for some women, to follow that interest, but then come back ( contact.

S: I think it is difficult to generalise. I certainly think

WOQ/A 85 4 - 5 64

that for most young Mitras, whether men or women, a couple of years in a good co-op situation is very, very helpful, even desirable. But after one has had, say, two or three or years in that good, positive, creative, co-op situation, well if one has got definite interests, connected with one's spiritual life and development as an individual. And one wants to follow them, very likely it is good that one should do that. But again one mustn't be precious about it. It shouldn't be that you end up doing just a little bit of pottery, say, once a month or something like that. It must be a quite genuine, deep interest that you want to give time to seriously and put energy into, and which does relate to your growth as an individual.

Samati: It has an effect on everything when you feel engaged ( ?)

S: Yes. But to get back to what I said, why I say that I don't want to seem to suggest that women should be like men, or take on the characteristics of men. I notice in men's study groups that arguments are sometimes quite heated. I suspect that they are not in women's

study group.

(confused voices and laughter)

S: About abstract things, not about personal things, problems or relationships, but about philosophical issues of a more general kind. Do you sometimes get heated?

V's Yes.

S: Well if you do it is quite a good sign, because quite often Thor men, they are..., there is no ill-will generated, it is just because they feel very strongly and they are in good communication. Sometimes you get the odd, difficult, mitra, that's a different matter. But men's ( ? ) discussions, from what I have overheard seem to be more vehement. What do you get heated about, tell me that, give a few examples.

Marichi: (Unclear)

possibility S: That's a good sign, because where that happens there is the~ of some spark developing because there is interest, and people do care about these issues. Maybe sometimes try to follow up those issues more and explore further. Because if you do get heated, well at least you are interested, at least there is a certain amount of emotional energy invested, even though you may be one-sided - very often that does happen. But provided you can engage in that heated discussion with mutual good will, on the whole, well that is O.K.

But I just get the impression sometimes, which may be quite wrong, that women broadly speaking, I am just speaking about within the Movement now, mainly; are a bit tepid compared with the men. Not easily aroused or excited.

Parami: I don't believe it! (Laughter)

S: I was speaking about these sorts of issues, not other V issues.

Marichi: Women have a tendency to harmony rather than...

TsThmes)

wOQ/A 85 4 - 6 65

Parami: I think sometimes that if one is perhaps the type of person who gets heated, is inclined..., what I mean is sometimes I do get heated about something that can be quite abstract, quite philosophical. And then I suddenly feel as if everybody is going sort of numb (V's: Yes) Then I suppose I start to back-track a bit because I suddenly feel as if I have squashed every-body else in the room or something.

S: Ahh, that's interesting. I have not heard this from anyone.

Parami: Not in ~y situation, there are some people that I can think of that that doesn't

happend with and they come back quite strongly and you do get some interaction. But sometimes I do feel that happens. And if I am an Order Member leading study for Mitras and that happens, well it's a bit..., you really don't want to squash all your Mitras! So you stop.

S: So it seems there is the possibility of spark.

Parami: Yes, absolutely. (V's yes)

S: Because that is really necessary, to inspire people, get things moving, get more people to think.

V: Do you think that is the general element of spark, do you think that is the main element that creates spark or is there something else? Ideas.

S: No, not just ideas, I gave that as an example, men seem to get more enthusiastic about ideas than women.

V: Do you think it is the challenging thing?

S: It's the challenging thing. Even in a way the competitive thing, provided it is healthy, doesn't go to extremes. One does see among the men a lot of hearty exchanges and maybe a bit of back slapping and all that. One doesn't want to suggest that women do that, but at least something analogous to that, if you see what I mean.

Sridevi: I think this is connected with what Vajrayogini said about holding each other back. Healthy competitiveness is really quite difficult to....

S: In our society, or at least not in our society but in alternative circles, competitive is a dirty word. Even some of the men, too, are affected by that. And perhaps the women even more so.

Parami: I think generally speaking in society, actually, I think you are right to say generally in society. Women aren't encouraged to be competitive at all and if you are a competitive woman then that also has got its dangers. It's got its own problem, I think that affects women's interactions.

S: The Greeks considered competition, competitiveness, to be a virtue .

Parami: Not amongst their women they didn't. As far as I can tell.

WOQ/A 85 4 - 7 66

S: Well there were exceptions, there were exceptions like Sapho.

Parami: ( ?) (Laughter) S: She was born ( ? ) (Drowned by laughter)

(just as various poets, lots of them were born on islands, not just marooned there because they were difficult ?)

Parami: She stayed there ( ?)

S: She flung herself from a rocky headland, into the sea because a young man, when she was quite elderly, wouldn't return her love.

Parami: She would have been better off (ht~yi~cJ

S: Anyway, what were we talking about? Competativeness. frve given some thought to this and I have discussed it in sePtinars, and by healthy competition, I mean, making use of the natural, human, especially perhaps masculine, tendency to competitiveness in a positive way as a means of urging yourself to do better. So that for instance, you don't mind in a sense who wins, yes, you are happy to and you would rather win than not win. But if by measuring yourself against another person, competing against another person you force yourself to do more, to do better than you would otherwise have done, you will stretch yourself further to your capacities. And that is what you really want. You have done your best, so you don't mind, really, fundamentally, that the other person wins. He was better than you, but alright, you have been stretched to the utmost of your capacity. And because that is your aim and object, you never think of winning at all costs. You don't really think, basically, in terms of winning, so for that reason you don't cheat, you don't foul, you don't take undue advantage. And that, I would say, is healthy competitiveness. Whereas in modern sports very often people want to win at all costs, even slightly dishonestly. As when they dope themselves before races and things like that, or in football when they trip someone up.

V: Maybe use money.

S: Or use bribery, yes. So I think we shouldn't be afraid of Wealthy, positive competitiveness within a spiritual context, as a skilful means provided competitiveness is understood in the way that I have indicated. And perhaps Vajrayogini does have a point there and that should be considered, that women shouldn't be afraid of doing better than one another, at least in certain respects. No-one is going to be best in every respect, but if you are better in a certain respect don't be ashamed of it, you are better. Don't be ashamed of even trying to do better in certain respects, than other people. But in that healthy, positive sort of way. Anyway, let's go on, we have nearly finished.

WOQ/A 85 4 - 67

'You have said recently that the women Order Members lack spark. Could you say more about what you mean by this?'

S: Well perhaps I have already dealt with that.

'You have linked it with the lack of women coming forward to be ordained. Could you say why? What can we do to develop more spark?'

S: I think sparky people probably have to get together more, bo you see what I mean? Otherwise your spark can be snuffed out, almost. I think those who feel that they have spark, perhaps should get together more and spark each other off to a greater degree. That's the only thing, really, I can suggest. So not, therefore, to have one Order Member here with some

relatively dull Mitras and another Order Member there with more relatively dull Mitras. From time to time you have to do that but make sure that there are opportunities for those of you who have got a bit of spark, or more spark than the rest, just to get together and have a good time sparking one another off, by whatsoever means. A bit of intensive study, discussion, argument, whatever it may be. Not being afraid of head on collisions and heated arguments and so on. And maybe you will go back to your individual study group energised and prepared to shake up your group a bit if it seems to need it.

Parami: Dhante, I have heard once that you, in relationship to a particular woman, had said that this particular woman had oomph, rather than spark. (laughter)

S: Well I'm glad there is only one.

Parami: It was only about one particular woman that I heard this statement and I wonder if you could...

(confused voices)

S: Well it is something like charisma. It is a sort of.., Vsuppose basically it is sex appeal in a dynamic sort of way. So that is different from spark and people, especially members of the opposite sex can find it stimulating, but it is not spark in the sense that I am talking about.

Parami: But this particular woman I think you were wrong. (laughter)

S: Let's take it as a general distinction (laughing.) Just as say, perhaps more in the case of men, some have charisma, but that is not to be mistaken for genuine maturity and insight. I know some men going on mixed retreats for beginners have been quite bowled over by some of the women Order Members, but it was also in that sort of way. I am not saying that they had oomph rather than spark, but they seemed to see them as rather goddess like figures, sitting up there, in a rather unreal sort of way. But usually it didn't last long, they got over it after a week or two, but there have been a few cases of this. Because one or two of them have come afterwards and told me about it. Again that wasn't a case of oomph - it's a wonderful word, isn't it? (laughter)

V: Is it sub-literary?

S: I don't know, it is a rather modern coinage. It could be

WOQ/A 85 4 - 9 68

used in a literary context.

V: It's onomatopoeic, isn't it.

S: I don't know if it is derived from that famous Greek woman with whom Hercules stayed called ( ?)

Marichi: I thought it was that Greek woman (

S: There is one photograph of Cleopatra in a book on ( ) falling out of the carpet and gazing solely at Julius Caesar. Anyway, (laughter) But the question is, serious in as much as you have listed it with the lack of women coming forward to be ordained. Could you say why? I think, perhaps, one of the reasons, and I think we have talked about this before, why more women... I won't say don't come forward to be ordained because many do ask to be ordained but aren't ready to be ordained, don't really come far enough in that direction, is because they haven't been, as it were, sparked off by the women Order Members that they are in contact with, to a sufficient extent. Which suggests a lack of spark, relatively, in those women Order Members. So I think the connection is there.

There needs to be more liveliness, more spark, more enthusiasm, more excitement. Do you see what I mean? But I hope one isn't, as I said, suggesting that women should be like men. If not that, well certainly the equivalent of that.

Sanghadevi: So is it, you get the feeling that they are not really grabbed by the spiritual life?

S: Yes, that's right. Or at least not grabbed so quickly. That it is their nature to evolve more slowly, well fair enough, but I can't say that I am completely sure that there is that difference of nature to that extent.

Jayaprabha: Do you think it can come out of having a one to one relationship with people rather than trying to have friendship with more, several.

S: I think if there were more intense one to one relationships there would be more ordinations, yes, definitely, provided they were intense and challenging and so on. Sometimes we have systematically organised that..., and I think the women have too to some extent, in connection with Tuscany, and it has worked almost like clockwork. It seems almost mechanical, I used to say two hours intensive contact a week between a Mitra and an Order Member but now we say a day. For instance on pre-Tuscany retreats or selection retreats every Mitra has to have a walk and talk with at least two Order Members a day. And if you apply that sort of pressure, as it were, it does work, it actually produces quite tangible results. It seems to be as simple as that. So I think that is the way that one has got to approach it. So, yes, I say more individual contact, provided it was intense, for want of a better word, not just a quiet little chat, even though that is better than nothing. But certainly something strong and intense and meaningful every time. If that is kept up, even for a period of weeks you start noticing actual differences, this is what I am told.

WOQ/A 85 4 - 10 69

Padmasuri: Bhante, in the past you have talked about people having a spiritual streak. Has that got something to do with spark. Because it is as though you sometimes get people who are quite sparky, but it is almost as though they haven't got much spiritual streak.

S: I know what you mean. I think people with a definite spiritual streak, as we say, are relatively rare. When I say spiritual streak I think of people who are definitely a bit other worldly, a bit out of this world, maybe a bit mystically inclined. I think that is comparatively rare, you don't get many such people.

Padmasuri: But I thought that you said that you thought you had to see that in somebody for

their readiness for ordination.

S: I said recently just a sense of the transcendental. but I would distinguish between a spiritual streak and a sense of the transcendental. I think by someone with a spiritual streak I mean someone who just isn't interested in ordinary worldly life, has got strong mystical tendencies and ascetic and other worldly. I think that is what I tend to mean. Anyway, final one of this particular set.

'Is there anything else you feel women Order Members need to particularly work on and develop'.

S: Well I think one just has to work on and develop everything. There's not sort of technique, in the sense of no trick or secret. Just working hard on everything. I think we have time to deal with these other questions. This is going off on a little bit of a tangent, but it does in a way follow on from this whole question of excitement about ideas and all that sort of thing. I think it would be a good thing if more women were to write. It also occurs to me in this connection, I have said this some time ago, it would be good to revive Dakini.

Parami: We have been talking about it again recently.

S: Yes. Because I think if you have to write, write seriously as distinct from just preparing a talk for a beginners group or something of that sort, you are forced to think, you are forced to study, you are forced to express your ideas. I think there are quite a few women in the movement who have got literary skills in the sense that they can write decent things. They know their grammar, they can construct a sentence, in fact probably on the average the women in the Movement are better in this respect than the men are on average. There are quite a few semi-literate men but on the other hand we have got several men who are outstanding in this respect. Subhuti has now produced two books and Nagabhodi has produced one, we haven't yet had anything very substantial from the women. karmalasila is writing a book on meditation. Padmasuri has written a, what do you call it, a sketch, story of an Indian woman. That's a somewhat different kind, I was thinking more reflective, thoughtful, philosophical things, expressions of ideas. Sometimes women do write articles for the News letter, I would like to see at least one or two women producing something more substantial, if anyone does feel like doing so. Do you see what I am getting at? If they have got time of course.

WOQ/A 85 4 - 11 70

(Several voices talking about time)

S: If one really wants to write one will. (V's agreement) Subhuti and Nagabhodi, they have each taken less than six months to write a book. You can write if you have really got something to say you can produce a book in that time, at least the draft of it, if you get away, you can't produce it in the midst of your usual surroundings and the usual demands on you.

But perhaps women should give more.., especially women Order Members, give more serious attention to expressing their ideas, their ideas about the Dharma, the spiritual life and so on, in writing, and not just when called upon by Nagabhodi for an article for a particular issue of the Newsletter, or even just for Dakini. But try to produce something more substantial, even if it is a short book, even if it is a book of a hundred pages on some aspect of

the spiritual life. I think it would be good if at least a few women were to do something of this sort.

Marichi: Why do you think it would be so good?

S: I think partly as a way of stirring up, among the women, deeper, more systemic serious interest in these sort of issues generally. And providing a focal point for discussion and maybe partly, also, as a means of helping to give greater self confidence to women in this particular area.

Jayaprabha: It is interesting this book 'Women of Wisdom', which I don't know whether you have seen.

S: I've seen it, yes, I haven't.., I saw it when Suvajra had Vt on retreat.

Jayaprabha: It is one of the best selling books in the bookshop and it feels like some women are really wanting books by other women. It doesn't necessarily reflect on the writing of the book because it is just one book by other women.

S: This links up with what I said about helping women develop Their confidence, because why should women especially want a book written by a woman?

V: It's about women too.

S: And also about women, therefore it adds to the attractiveness of it. But the fact that they want a book written by a woman presumably it's as though they need to feel that a woman is capable of writing that sort of work on that sort of subject.

Parami: Women do want role models in that way, it does help to have role models.

S: Yes, but I don't like the expression role model, because that goes beyond the role, but I know what you mean, yes.

Parami: (Unclear)

S: Ideals. I can't help thinking that it would have quite an impact on the women in the Movement, possibly on the men too, if there are also booklets released or small books, by women in the movement on sale in the bookshops.~

~OQ7A 85 4 - 12 71

Parami: It is also another way of going outside the movement. Because I think at the moment, generally speaking a lot of people are interested about things written by women. In a way it is a good time. ...

S: Right, yes. I don't say that women Order Members should necessarily just write about women, or matters of interest just to women, but about the spiritual life. About meditation or some aspect of the Dharma, maybe short treatises on the Brahma viharas or whatever one

happened to be really interested in and felt that one had something to say or wanted to do a bit of research on and embody it in a small book, or even a big one. Also in this connection, one woman at least, I forget who it was, probably a Mitra, wrote to me saying what did I feel about her taking up a course in which she studied Pali, Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. I think I would be quite in favour of that, partly because I am encouraging people within the Movement to do that in any case, and also it would be good to have a woman who was involved in that. I think it was a Mitra outside London. It is a way of acquiring knowledge, giving more substance to one's general knowledge of Buddhism, especially if one knows some Pali and Sanskrit. So again maybe this is an example of being a bit more adventurous and of broadening one's area. Having a wider, a broader approach. Otherwise, I also think that in a way the Movement gets a little out of balance. You have got more men Order Members than women Order Members to begin with, then whatever books are produced by the Movement itself are all by men, so far, so that also gives perhaps a slight one-sided impression. So it would be good if, from that point of view also, there were a few on our book stalls which were written by women in the Movement. Maybe women would be interested in Buddhist stories, or Buddhist stories for children or something of that sort. I am not suggesting that they just cater to the sub-intellectual end of the market but there are those areas too if one doesn't want to concentrate on something purely intellectual.

Jayaprabha: Actually that area, there is no good book for children which is not expensive. There is one that you found, called 'Prince Siddhartha', it's eight pounds. There is a woman who knows Jayamati and who teaches children of eleven and twelve and wanted a book that went into, not just the Buddha's life, but into the philosophy of Buddhism, but with quite big print and pictures. But something that actually was quite concrete.

V: (Unclear)

Jayaprabha: And there is nothing like that available.

S: That is quite interesting. You are quite sure there is nothing like that?

Jayaprabha: Well I hadn't come across anything and she hadn't come across anything. She had been looking but was still looking.

Padmasuri: In India they have comics.

S: In Marathi presumably.

Padmasuri: And English.

WOQ/A 4 - 13      72

S: Maybe you should try and import some. I've not seen them.

Parami: I thought one of the suggestions that you made in the study group leaders seminar was quite interesting, about women who'd had perhaps particularly strong religious

conditioning writing about their own quest to overcome it.

S: That's true, yes. For instance, just to give you an example. Someone gave me a book, I forget who it was, called 'Daughters'. I think it was 'Daughters'. It was on fathers and daughters, a number of women had related their experiences of or with their fathers. So in the same sort of way women in the Movement or connected with the Movement could write about their experiences as women with this or that form of Christianity. I know some women have got quite a bit to say on this subject. And be concerned to write it well with attention to its value as literature, so to speak. This is something that could be done.

Parami: Perhaps one person could almost ghost write, almost, for a few people who had different experiences.

S: Yes, they could interview them and write out, those who were able to write at all well.

Parami: Because we have got a selection, we have got an ex-Hindu, a number of ex-Roman Catholics, a vicars daughter.

V: These could be articles in Dakini.

S: That's right, you could print them and then gather them together and produce them in book form. Women and religion or something of that sort, or maybe a more exciting title.

I read this book on daughters and it was actually quite interesting, some of them were very well written from a literary point of view, others weren't. But even those that weren't were quite interesting and in some respects eye opening about the things that did go on between fathers and daughters, psycholo- gically and sometimes not just psychologically. Perhaps they weren't representative but they were human documents and they needed to be taken into consideration.

Parami: I suspect they are probably are representative.

S: Maybe. So, yes, maybe an anthology of women recounting Thheir personal experiences of, say, a Christian upbringing or a Christian education. It would be quite useful and helpful. Some of you know that at Padmaloka we have been having contact with some Anglian Priests connected with the (Julien ?) shrine in Norwich. Several of them have mentioned quite frankly that the way Christianity is taught does quite a bit of harm to children and they seem quite aware of that. But obviously there are a lot of clergy and teachers of Christianity who are not aware of that and still go on teaching in the old way. I think, also, it would have perhaps a cathartic effect on the women themselves writing, actually putting it down. Not just spluttering with rage but actually putting it down in a very articulate way. I think it would be of definite interest to people inside and outside the movement.

Parami: It would be quite helpful actually.

S: Men have also got their experiences of Christianity, but it seems especially in the case of Catholicism, Christianity seems to be

(end side 1)

alone of all her sex. Quite interesting, partly because it goes into such a lot of historical and cultural background and detail and showed the factors that did shape the development of that particular myth. The writer writes quite critically, though with sympathy.

parami: Some of the statements I found a bit of f. We've got a copy at home, actually.

S: She does refer to Buddhism once and Buddhist attitudes, and she seems more sympathetic to those, actually, than to Catholic attitudes. Mainly in connection with death and trans- cience.

V: Can you remember (

V: Maria (Moan ?)

S: Maria something, that's right. I found it quite interesting, Th was well researched. Again it was a quite scholarly book but in a popular sort of way, quite interestingly written. She was an ex-Catholic brought up in a Catholic school. Of course a classic account of a Catholic education, in case you haven't seen it, is James Joyce's 'Portrait of the artist as a young man', that's been a real classic. I infinitely prefer that to Ulysses, I think it really is a classic.

Parami: There's some wonderful scenes in it.

S: It is so beautiful. Another, of course, autobiography Which describes in detail emancipation from Christian upbringing is Samuel Butler's 'The Way of all Flesh'. That is extremely good from that p0int of view too.

Parami: There's a much lighter, but quite interesting by way of Catholic, called 'Memoirs of a Catholic Girlhood'.

S: I've heard of that.

Parami: It's quite interesting. It is quite different in style from Joyce, her writing is nowhere near as good. But it is quite interesting, memories of a convent, Catholic relations, aunties and uncles.

S: So think about it seriously. Because if you could produce Uwelve or fourteen autobiographical sketches~ as it were, dealing with that particular aspect of your life, education, upbringing. They could possibly make a quite worthwhile book which might even find a commercial publisher. But if not, well we could bring out within the Movement.

Parami: Somebody ought to take it on as a project.

S: But if anybody is seriously thinking of reviving Dakini, I think I would very much encourage that. Because I was always

WOQ/A 85 4 - 15 74

quite pleased that there was that sort of forum, and there were some quite interesting things in it.

Jayaprabha: The other thing, I have just remembered what this teacher said about Buddhist material is, that a lot of schools now are having to teach.. ,they are given a choice of several different religions to choose from. And she said that it is quite inevitable that Buddhism always comes last, they wouldn't choose Buddhism it would always be something else, Islam or something else. When I asked her why she said 'because they don't dare touch it'. They don't know anything about it and the information about it is so ( ?)

S: We have been receiving at Padmaloka text books that have been produced by some local authorities. One that we received was not too bad, actually.

Jayaprabha: Ahh, perhaps I'll ring up and get a copy.

S: Yes, Subhuti could hunt out a copy for you, or where to get it from. But we need to be much more in touch with that whole area. I think there are some Buddhist books for children, books on Buddhist material published in the States. I have seen them advertised I think. Anyway I think that is really it, actually. So we get to the Dharma questions tomorrow.

WOQ/A 85 5 - 1 75

### **Question and Answer Session on Chapter 12 of The Three Jewels. The Human Situation.**

S: So the first batch of questions is about other religions viz a viz the uniqueness of man and the position of animals. There are three questions here and the second question is subdivided into two.

'Do you know of other religions, philosophies or schools, whether Christian or non-Christian which have a similar view to Buddhism that man is not unique in the sense of being discreet, e.g. Cathars, Taoism, Pythagoreans etc.?'

S: 'Man not unique in the sense of being discreet'. I think probably to understand this properly one has to go back to a stage of thought, if you like a stage of human life or human history, preceding that of the philosophies. Preceding Buddhism. One of the things I noticed, studying or reading about Indian literature, especially Indian religious literature, was the very close contact that there seemed to be in India right from the beginning, between human and animal life. For instance I remember reading about quite idyllic descriptions of hermits living in the forest and about how the birds and the deer would quite naturally gather round and be quite unafraid. It is as though man had, at that time, or at least some people did

in India, had a sort of feeling, a sort of sense of unity with nature. The point I am trying to make is that that sort of sense seems to have preceded (i) the formulation of that sense in explicit philosophical terms. So I think, but this is a bit speculative, a bit hypothetical, I think that we mustn't imagine the early Buddhists, or others, as developing a philosophy of non-violence and then proceeding to act in accordance with it. I think that is only part of the story, only part of the picture. I think that right from the beginning, human beings, by virtue of the fact that they were living beings, living things, had a sort of sense, a sort of feeling of unity, to give it a quite abstract word which maybe wouldn't have given, unity with other forms of life and a sensitivity to other forms of life. That they may have taken life when necessary to sustain their own but they didn't indulge in wanton destructiveness. So it seems to me that in some parts of the world, in some religions, as they afterwards became, or schools of thought as they afterwards became, this sort of sense, as I have called it, of the oneness of life, of the unity of life, survived to a greater extent than it did in certain others.

I can remember years ago; in giving this incident I am just trying to work myself back into the feeling of what I am talking about. I remember years ago when I was a child, I couldn't have been more than five or six, seven at the most. I was taken by my father to see a film. My Father hardly ever went to see films, he didn't like films, he disapproved of films, but he occasionally went when there was something that he particularly wanted to see. So one evening he took me to see, I think it might have been at the Granada, Tooting (laughter) a film called "Africa Speaks". It might even have been a silent film, I don't remember, because as a child I did see silent films, I'm as old as that! I remember this film 'Africa Speaks' which was just about nature, wildlife in Africa, of course in black and white. It produced a tremendous impression on me, what

WOQ/A 85 5 - 2      76

impressed me most of all, I can still remember it very vividly, was the sense of the abundance of life. The abundance of wild life, there were herds containing tens of thousands of deer of different kinds. There were herds of hundreds of elephants and hundreds of giraffes and thousands of antelopes, and ostriches, I remember, and swarms of locusts. So the impression that I got was of a swarming abundance of life and early man lived in the midst of that. I mean, how do we live, especially those of us who live in the cities. We see human beings and we see the odd dog and the odd cat, a sparrow or two, and that's about it. But early man was surrounded by animal life. There was far more animal life than there was human life, so man could not but be aware of life in all these multifarious forms around him. Not to speak of vegetable life, trees, bushes. We have a few of them around nowadays but if we live in the city they are not really very prominent. So I think early man must have had a sense of other living things in the way that we don't have. I think you can still have a small experience of this sort even in the existing Africa, probably nowhere else in the world, as regards the abundance of purely animal life. So I think it was in a way only natural that early man should have thought of himself as being just one form of life among many. And they will have had, therefore, some feeling for other forms of life. Not thinking of them as so different from himself. There are all sorts of stories, all sorts of legends which have come down to us in which animals talk, birds talk. They are not seen as so different from human beings. You have even got those, I think it is American, legends, probably of African slave origin, about Brer Rabbit and Brer Bear. Brer is brother rabbit, and brother bear and brother deer, and this is how man felt. So something of this comes over from ancient Indian literature and I am sure the Buddhist monks who lived in the forests and were surrounded by animals had this

sort of feeling. So we musn't think just in terms of a certain philosophical position, thought out in abstract terms, which people then proceeded to put into operation. I think this is the main point that I am making there. I think that even in modern people this sort of sense of what in abstract terms I have called the unity of life, does persist. I think if you are a healthy human being, a normal human being, you don't like to take life. You might take it if it was necessary for your own continued existence, but I think you would do no more than that, you wouldn't destroy life wantonly. Then, of course, the question arises, and here we come onto the second question.

'Could you say why you think the semitic faiths developed their dogma, that there was an irreducible difference between man and animals?'

Well talking about this just now an idea ocured to me, again it is a bit speculative, a bit hypothetical, but didn't the Semites come from the deserts? There is not all that much life in the desert. I don't know whether what is now desert was always desert, Perhaps it wasn't. But we do get the impression that Arabia and Palestine and Egypt were pretty dry, pretty barren. So man sort of stood out there, more than he did, perhaps, in other parts of the world. This idea just ocured to me now. Then of course we know, in the case of Judaism, according to the Bible, according to the book of Genesis; man was created in

WOQ/A 85 5 - 3      77

the image of God and the animals weren't, they were created simply for the use of man. Of course that doesn't really explain because why should the book of Genesis present things in those sorts of terms. But it could be that the climatic background had something to do with it.

I think if you are raised, if you grow up surrounded by rich, luxurious vegetation and swarms of animals, I think you have a different outlook on life, to some e-xtent, than you would have if you were brought up in the desert or if, of course, you were brought up in the midst of the modern, urban, concrete jungle. So what I am basically getting at is, the philosophies come later and they are, in a sense, a rationalisation, if you like, a presen- tation in rational terms, of much more basic attitudes. But I think that man's feeling for the rest of life, for all other forms of life is something quite basic and which has got stifled, as it were, in various ways, for various reasons, in the case of some civilisations and some cultures, some religions even. Certain other religions like Buddhism itself and the others that have been mentioned, the other trains of thought, they have tried to recapture that original sense of the unity of life, perhaps on a higher ethical and spiritual level. But I think it doesn't belong only to that higher ethical and spiritual level, I think it is something deeper, more instinctive, even, as it were, more organic. Do you see what I am getting at? Then the second part of this second question is:-

'Do you know anything about the origin and significance of Pantheism?'

Well, Pantheism is a philisophical positiOn, or religious position which holds that all is God. That everything that exists is in fact God in different forms, God assuming different forms. Some- times some forms of Hinduism are described as Pantheistic. Spinoza' S philosophy is described as Pantheistic. He says there is only one reality and that reality is God, and that

reality which is God has infinite attributes. Only two of those attributes are known to us, those of space and time, and we perceive every- thing under the form of space and time. So that is philosophical Pantheism. But I would say that the origin of Pantheism really goes back to this sort of sense that I have been talking about. I think a sort of quasi Pantheism, a Pantheism without God, if one can use that expression, is an essential ingredient of a healthy human attitude. I think this does come out in Buddhism. I think Dr. Suzuki once said that in Buddhism everything was God, but there was no God. I think that just about sums it up. I think if you are a normal healthy human being, you will actually feel that not only other human beings are alive as you are alive, but animals are alive, as you are alive, it is only a difference of degree. That plants are alive, that trees and flowers are alive. Sometimes it shocks me that people, for instance, can buy a potted plant and then they forget to water it, so that it withers and dies. To me this seems really quite criminal, it's almost like having a child and then forgetting to feed it so that it dies. Because you should have sufficient feeling for the plants that you have acquired to want to keep it alive. If you don't remember to water it there is not only something wrong with your mindfulness there is something wrong with your state of feeling. Do you see what I am getting at? I hope it doesn't sound too fantastic! (laughter) I think it is this basic awareness and this basic feeling of the livingness of other forms of life that we have to

WOQ/A 85 5 - 4 78

get back to. It is not a question of adopting a particular line of philosophy. Certainly the philosophy makes it clear, it brings it to a higher level of awareness, and Buddhism, certainly, does this. But I really think it is the feeling that you have got to get back to and develop and nourish. But it is not surprising that we don't have much feeling for animals or plant life, we are living in the midst of a concrete jungle and don't often come into contact with these things. I don't know if any of you have noticed how differently you feel if you are in the midst of a forest, or in the midst of lots of vegetation. It has a very definite effect on you. It's as though organism speaks to organism, on a quite basic level. So this is answering the questions in very general terms, basic terms, but I think these are the terms in which these sort of questions have to be considered. It is not a philosophical point, it is something much deeper, much more basic than that. The third question is rather different.

'In semitic faiths animals are exploited and tortured for benefit and amusement. As Buddhists we benefit from animals being exploited for medical research, thereby tacitly condoning it. What do you, Bhante, feel about using animals to stop human beings from dying?'

Well the question is what I feel and I am going to take that quite literally. What I feel rather than what I think. Personally I don't feel happy about it at all, my instinctive reaction is that I just don't like it. I certainly wouldn't feel happy that my own life was prolonged at the expense of the suffering of animals, even though, yes, animals are a lower form of life. But it would seem that a higher form of life, assuming that we are that, ought not to accept, well I was going to say the sacrifice of other forms of life but then they don't sacrifice themselves, we put them in that position, we exploit them. And I don't feel that that is really justifiable.

I know it is a question that can be argued this way and that, and there are reasons and arguments on both sides of the question, but I was asked about my feeling so it is about my feeling that I am talking. In a sense, perhaps, I am evading the question but I am not evading the question I have actually been asked! (laughter) Of course one might, for instance, say

that for oneself, but suppose you have a child and it is a question of choosing between the death, perhaps, of your child and the death of animals. Well you might feel differently then, but speaking for myself I wouldn't feel happy that my life was being prolonged as a result of the suffering of other forms of life. It isn't as though there are so few human beings on the face of the earth that one has to preserve them at all costs. Perhaps if there were only two or three of us left, well sacrificing animals for the sake of preserving human life might be justifiable. But there are more of us than there ever have been before in history. There is five billions I think it is now. I did read somewhere that there are more human beings alive now than all the human beings taken before in history. So we are not short of human beings, so I think we need to improve the quality of human beings rather than the quantity. Perhaps one of the ways in which we can improve the quality of human life is just to refuse to prolong individual human lives at the expense of animal suffering. This is my personal feeling. But there is a very great deal of exploitation of animals

WOQ/A 85 5 - 5      79

goes on. I think in the United Kingdom alone it is some millions a year of animals. I think the figure I saw recently was five millions. It is not just a few dozen or a few hundred, or even a few thousand it is five million, just in the United Kingdom. Then you think of how many animals suffer to some extent in this way in other countries, you've got hundreds of millions, And what is this for the sake of. Very often it is not even for the sake of prolonging life but testing cosmetics and things like that, and this is really not excusable, one might say.

So my feeling is very much against medical research that involves exploiting animals in this way. So the answers to these questions have been rather 'feelingful' rather than rational or logical, but perhaps in these matters our feeling is a safer guide. perhaps we are too ready to do violence to our feelings. Perhaps we should be, in some respects, in some cases, more faithful to our own genuine feelings. Because if we go against them and if they are deep and they are genuine and positive, that cannot be good for us. It cannot be good for humanity as a whole. So I am not laying down any sort of rule of individual cases, I am just stating the need to cultivate, on the whole, broadly speaking a certain basic feeling with regard to all other forms of life, from the highest to the lowest. Alright then, let's pass on. Some of the other questions are going to be very intellectual indeed. Questions on psycho-physical energy.

'At the beginning of this chapter you mentioned separate currents of psychical energy each of which can associate itself with any form. We have heard that you have spoken about psychical energy splitting at death and associating itself with two forms, using the image of clouds, evaporating and condensing. Is it common for consciousness to divide in this way at time of death?'

Well that's quite a question! I think it is useful, sometimes, to think of consciousness with the help of the image of clouds evaporating and condensing. Perhaps we ought to realise, ought to remember that we know very little about consciousness. We know very little about our own minds. Our minds are in fact multilayered, multidimensional, they are multichambered, as it were. They are like a series of caverns going deeper and deeper into the earth, very few of which we have actually explored. I think we need, again it is a question of a sense, we need to develop this sort of sense. That the little illuminated area which we usually inhabit is not the whole of us. Whatever you may look like on the surface there are really hidden depths,

and of course hidden heights. Sometimes it is difficult to tell which are the heights and which are the depths. You might even say, you can use either nomenclature; sometimes we speak of the depths and sometimes we speak of the heights within the spiritual context. Some of you may know that in Buddhist tradition, in the Mahayana, the Madhyamika is known as the profound Madhyamika and the Yogachara is known as the sublime Yogachara. That is quite interesting, because it is as though Madhyamika, which talks about the Void, Sunyata, conveys an impression of profundity. Whereas the Yogachara, which talks about mind, the one mind, conveys, perhaps, an impression of sublimity. But the two are ultimately one. You can talk about these extra dimensions in terms either of heights or depths. So we have, in the same kind of way, also, to think of

WOQ/A 85 5 - 6      80

consciousness in terms of unity and multiplicity. We know that much of the time that we are not whole selves, we are fragmented selves. We are a whole quagmire of 'I's' very loosely strung together. And one of the things that we have to do in the course of our spiritual life is to unify all these different I's, all these different selves, to bring them more and more together. But in a way that is only half the story, or only part of the story, because you can say that you can bring all these fragments together, you can mould them or shape them into a whole, but then it is possible for that whole to give birth to other wholes. So this means that at the time of death there are two possibilities, at the time of death someone can be so fragmented that different fragments go different ways, do you see what I mean? But you can also be so integrated that at the moment of death, that whole can give birth to a number of wholes. I think the connection in which I originally mentioned this was that of, what is sometimes called multiple reincarnation, as of certain great Lamas. Among them one of my own teachers, Jamyang Kentsé Rimpoché (?), whose predecessor was believed to have been reborn in five different forms. Have you heard about this? (V's. No) You know that traditionally the individual is divided into body, speech and mind. Well the Vajrayana goes a stage further and divides into body, speech and mind, guna - which is spiritual quality, and karana - which is action. So it is said, it is believed that the former Jamyang Kentsé Rimpoché, at the time of his death was such a highly developed person that he did not 'reincarnate' - in inverted commas - as one individual, so to speak, but as five individuals. Out of those five I knew three and one of them was the principle one of the five and it was he, whom I speak of as the Jamyang Kentsé Rimpoché, who was one of my teachers. I am not trying to prove anything, I am citing, as it were, tradition. I am trying to illustrate the multidimensional nature of what we call consciousness, this stream of psychological energy. I am just trying to illustrate in this sort of way that we are just in contact with just a small fraction of ourselves, that our possibilities extend far, far beyond what we usually think in terms of.

Each one of you is just the tip of an iceberg, maybe iceberg is not quite the right comparison in some ways, but in others it is, because just as you are sitting here other people, including yourselves just see that tip. And you think of that tip as you, when actually that tip is just the tip of an iceberg which goes down and down into your depths and of which one can hardly find the limit. And I think one has to get this sense of being, in Wordsworth's phrase 'that we are greater than we know'. Not greater in the sense of bigger and more important, but greater in the sense of more expansive, more multidimensional. So the question is, 'is it common for consciousness to divide in this way at the time of death?' Well the second kind of division of course is very, very rare. Perhaps the other kind of division, that is the different fragments of a fragmented unintegrated personality drifting off in different directions, perhaps

that is not so rare. But it does seem, in the case of most human beings the stream connecting the different bits and pieces is sufficiently strong to keep them all together and they are reincarnated, to use that word, or are reborn, or become associated with another physical body, on this or that level, more or less together. Perhaps one should have those sorts of pictures in connection with this sort of question.

WOQ/A 85 5 - 7 81

So, on to question two.

'You say that Buddhism thinks of sentient beings in terms of separate currents of psychical energy. How separate are these currents? You seem to interchange the words 'currents of psychical energy' and 'streams of consciousness' - are they the same, or are there subtle differences between them?'

Perhaps I should read the third question also, being as it overlaps to some extent with the second.

'When you say energy is primary, form is secondary, could consciousness be substituted for energy? If so would it be *vinnana* as in the twelve negative *nidanas* and the constituent volitions, the *samskaras*?'

Well one has got three terms here, one has got consciousness, energy and volition. Perhaps energy is the more basic term in the sense of the more general term. Because you have got energy which is, so to speak, illumined by consciousness and energy which is not illumined by consciousness. You have got energy which expresses itself in terms of volition and energy which does not express itself in terms of volition. Perhaps one could say that energy was the most general term, that the consciousness was the next most general and volition the least general. Because all living things have got energy, even inanimate things have got energy, they haven't all got consciousness. Animals have got consciousness in the sense of sense consciousness, but they haven't got self consciousness. So that one could say that volition is usually defined as the sum total of energy available to the conscious, that is to say the self conscious subject. So volition thus defined pertains to human beings, pertains to individuals with a small 'i'. Consciousness pertains not only to such individuals but also to animals, and energy to plants and even inanimate things. So one can say that energy, therefore, is the more basic term. So one can think of all living things in terms of expressions of energy, but in the case of human beings it is not only a question of an expression of energy but an expression of consciousness. Not only an expression of consciousness, but an expression of volition. Do you see what I am getting at? So one can discuss the matter in all three ways. But the important thing is to realise that energy is primary, consciousness is primary, volition even is primary and that the expression is secondary. So to go back to this question, 'when you say that energy is primary, form is secondary, could consciousness be substituted for energy?' Well, yes, in the case of animals and human beings. And in the case of human beings alone, volition can be substituted. 'How separate are these currents?' When you speak of a current of energy or consciousness or even of volition, how separate are they? It seems to me the more basic they are the less separate. If one thinks of, let's say, the currents of psychical energy, it's not that you have got a current here and a current there and another current there, like three wires lying side by side and not touching. It is not like that, it is rather like having a stream, but within the stream there are more concentrated streams. The individual stream is a co-agulation, to some extent, of the general stream. I know that I am

talking in a very non scientific way, but I don't know whether we can express the matter scientifically. I spoke a little while ago about having a sense of the livingness of other forms of life. I think the only reason why one is able to have that

WOQ/A 85 5 - 8      82

sense is that in a way that is not susceptible of very precise scientific formulation, you are interconnected, or even are parts of a whole. Not parts of a whole in the sense of the parts of a motor car, it's much more like this general stream which I mentioned, with co-agulations here and there. Do you see what I mean or am I not making it very clear? To take an analogy from physics. We know that matter is distributed throughout space, but how is it distributed? It is not evenly distributed, it is distributed very unevenly. Though it is distributed throughout space it is distributed more thickly, so to speak, in some areas than in others. So in the same way energy co-agulates and forms within the broad general stream an individual stream, a number of individual streams. So one isn't to think in terms of mutually exclusive, interlocking parts, nor of something being just all one and the same. One is to think in terms of a middle position in between those two. So it is as though, you are you, yes, but it is not that there is a hard and fast division between them. I shade off into you. What I think of as me and what you think of as you is the centre of a particular co-agulation, not a completely separate thing. So it is very difficult to tell where the edges of you begin and the edges of me come to an end. It is because of this that we can have a sense, a real sense as distinct from just thinking about, of other forms of life. Even if you think in physical terms, your body is giving off tiny particles, those particles are really part of you. If you could see yourself clearly you would see yourself surrounded by little tiny particles of skin and hair and those would form a sort of physical aura. But the people sitting near you also have similar auras, little microscopic bits of skin and hair just floating around you, and you can't tell where one little aura begins and the other ends. And it is like this, really, on every level.

(end side 1)

So one might say that in nature there are no hard edges. Every-thing shades off into everything. But that does not mean that one thing cannot be distinguished from another. Because there are what I call centres of co-agulation. It is like when you are whipping up flour, mixing flour with milk, it is not all of the same consistency, there are lumps in the mixture. So what we think of as individual beings are like lumps in this mixture, which is actually a mixture, they are lumps in a mixture, not completely separate lumps with empty space inbetween. Inbetween they have got the thinner media to which they belong, of which or in which they are the lumps. This probably sounds horribly unscientific! (laughter) I don't think it contradicts science, one is simply speaking a different kind of language. But yes, energy, or consciousness or volition is primary. Then question four.

'When you talk in terms of will, i.e 'it is not that man wills, but rather that will 'mans' ' (or woman's of course!) presumably you are referring to consciousness as in consciousness determines being. (Yes that is true) Our discussion centred on will as volition as an effect of consciousness. Can one equate will with consciousness?

Well I have already explained that they overlap to some extent, in as much as the animal has sense consciousness but it doesn't have will or volition as a human being does.

Perhaps we should go into that a little bit more. What is will, what is volition. Volition or will, as I have mentioned

WOQ/A 85 5 - 9      83

is defined as the sum total energy available to the conscious subject. If you have a volition what does that mean, that you will to do something. But you can only will to do something if you have a clear conception of causes and effects, of consequences and an animal, of course, doesn't have that, because that suggests a dissociation from the present moment. A human being can will to do something, an animal merely does it or doesn't do it, but it is only a human being who can will to do something. For instance, decide to build a house, because that involves an idea of a house, it involves understanding all the steps that have to be taken, all the processes that have to be gone through, all the procedures that have to be gone through, the length of time that each will take in order to build a house. So the house is built as a result of your will or your volition to build a house. In the case of the animal that is quite impossible. The animal may build what we may metaphorically call a house, but it does it as a result of instinct, not as a result of will or volition. So you cannot really have will or volition unless you are a self conscious individual, a self conscious human being, capable of foreseeing, capable of planning, capable of thinking in terms of cause and effect and consequences in a way that is not possible for an animal. So even though an animal has consciousness, that is to say self consciousness, it does not have will or volition. We sometimes say that the dog wants to do this or wants to do that but that is not really quite correct. It has an instinct, an urge which superficially looks like a human being wanting to do something or having a volition to do something, when actually it is usually a quite different thing.

Parami: Can I ask you a question? I don't understand, if consciousness and volition are conscious, how that connects with the samskaras and vinnana in terms of the negative nidanas. Because I always understood that, I have been working under a complete misunderstanding, because I understand that to be the unconscious volition that propels a consciousness into the next form - nama-rupa, and that it wasn't as conscious as you seem to be discussing it here.

S: Ahh, the fact that a certain mental factor is included in The effect is not to say that it is not included in the cause because it is not specifically mentioned. Each of the nidanas is a whole complex of conditions and in enumerating the nidanas usually only the most prominent or relevant factor or element is mentioned, not all of them. So when one speaks in terms of samskaras, one is not to think in terms, merely, of a blind driving force but also of conscious volitions.

Parami: I still don't think I understand.

S: Well put it more concretely.

Parami: What, what I don't understand?

S: No, the example, the samskaras and vinnana. Are you thinking That because

vinnana is mentioned as the subsequent nidana, therefore it is excluded from the antecedent nidana?

Parami: Well no, I think I don't understand what vinnana means. I think I have always understood that vinnana, in terms of the nidanas, to be more of whatever is the uppermost

84

WOQ/A 85 5 - 10

volitional aspect~ but I think I thought of it as an unconscious volitional aspect which from what you are saying seems to be a contradiction in terms.

S: No, volition can, as I said earlier, be illumined by consciousness. In fact consciousness, in the case of a human being, and volition only has significance only in relation to human beings. There is consciousness first, one might say. First there is the basic energy, then that energy can be illumined up to the point of sense consciousness but when sense consciousness becomes self-consciousness you don't only have self-consciousness you also have the possibility of volitional will as distinct from animal instinct. Perhaps the difficulty is simply one of relating this kind of explanation to the traditional one in terms of the samskaras and vinnana. Is that clearer?

Parami: No, I think I have just got to go and think about it, actually.

V: The nidanas begin with a symbol of unconsciousness in terms of the drunken man, I think that is

S: Ahh, but it is avidya.

V: It's ignorance rather than unconsciousness.

S: It's ignorance rather than unconsciousness, because someone can be very conscious in the ordinary sense but spiritually be quite ignorant, one might say. Lacking the higher awareness, let us say. If one puts it in those terms it is really, if one thinks of avidya as first in a sense, though it isn't first in an ultimate sense, then it is privation of transcendental awareness. Because it is because of that lack of transcendental awareness that you are revolving in samsara, not on account of the lack of some non-transcendental awareness.

Parami: Yes, I think I...

Vidyasri: Could I just ask one more question on that, which might be a very obvious one. You say animals don't, can't have that conscious volition, like in terms of building a house, do all human beings have it?

S: I think all human beings possess it to a degree but the degree to which they possess it can vary very much. I think most human beings would be capable of constructing a rough and ready shelter if necessary, out of whatever materials did lie to hand, of circumstances compelled them to do that. But certainly some human beings have got far greater capacity

than others in that respect. You can see it in the case of the people that you meet, when you ask someone to do something and they just do it, they can see at once how it needs to be done and they do it properly, quickly, efficiently. Ask somebody else to do that same thing, they are just stumped, they just don't know how to go about it. Is that that sort of thing you were asking about?

Vidyasri: It is but you said that animals can construct something through instinct, because some animals do construct

WOQ/A 85 5 - 11 85

quite complex nests or whatever, so some human beings may do things through instincts.

S: It would seem not. It seems, from what I remember, from my study of biology, study of evolution, it is as though instinct and intelligence are two quite different sorts of developments. It's as though human beings are on the line of the development of intelligence, not on the line of development of instinct. Instinct is inherited, whereas intelligence, in that sense, isn't. Insects have got wonderful instincts, ants, bees, in some ways they can do things that human beings can't do. But they are programmed to do it. Sometimes they will carry on acting in accordance with instinct even though, in their specific case, it is no longer of any use. For instance I was reading recently about ducks, certainly some kinds of ducks. Ducks, of course lay eggs, because they are birds. Apparently the male and the female take it in turns to sit on the eggs, the male sits for a few hours, the female sits for a few hours and in that way it goes on. Now supposing one of the pair is killed, the one that is not killed will go on sitting on the eggs but not all the time, he or she will sit on them for two or three hours and then go off for two or three hours and then come back, because that is what instinct says. But inbetween of course, the two or three hours when the eggs are not being sat on they grow cold and of course they die. Whereas a human being, supposing they had eggs (laughter) she would think, or he would think, 'no, my partner has gone, I will have to do double duty because otherwise the eggs will not hatch.' So that is the difference between instinct and intelligence. It is easier in many ways, to rely upon instinct than to rely upon intelligence, but intelligence has the greater adaptability and therefore in the long run it is of greater evolutionary significance. In the case of instinct it might take hundreds of generations to modify behaviour, but in the case of intelligence there is no question of modification, you can adjust your behaviour in a single life-time, in a single five minute period, even. That is the difference between intelligence and instinct. So one might say that intelligence makes possible the speeding up of development of the individual concerned, in a way which is not possible if one has to rely upon instinct. This is not, I don't deny, since we are on this subject, that it may be that some of the higher animals associated with human beings, for instance dogs and horses, may develop a measure of volition, but that will be associated, if it is developed, with a measure of self-consciousness. And I don't deny that some higher animals, especially those associated with human beings, can develop at least the rudiments of self consciousness. One can sometimes see this in animals. Another question.

'Presumably we in the Movement have still failed to grasp the principle that sentient beings exist primarily as energy and only secondarily as form. In what ways do you see this manifest in particular tendencies in the Movement?'

I am not quite sure what the questioner was getting at. 'Presumably we in the

Movement have still failed to grasp the principle that sentient beings exist primarily as energy and only secondarily as form'. Well perhaps what we have failed to grasp is the fact that we shouldn't identify ourselves with

WOQ/A 85 5 - 12 86

our present expressions. The follow up of the question is, in what ways do you see this manifest in particular tendencies in the Movement'. Well there is one I have referred to in The Ten Pillars, that is to say, overidentification with one's present gender. You could even go further than this and say, with one's present species, present nationality, present linguistic group. We tend to over identify with all these things and they are only expressions and next time round we could well be expressing ourselves in a different way. What's the point of hating the Germans, say, in your next lifetime you might be born as one. So one can apply this in all sorts of ways. I think if one does this, at the very least, it will help one realise the unity of all human life. We really do over identify, almost always, with the particular form that we happen to have assumed this time round. If we are white we think of ourselves as white, as if we are going to be white every birth. If we are black it is just the same, if we are male, if we are female, if we are French, German, Italian, Chinese or whatever. We identify ourselves with the outward expression, so to speak, rather than with the inner energy. So the implications of this, I think, are pretty obvious. You can even apply it to religions, at least the ethnic or group sense. You might be, in this life, very anti-Catholic but you might the next time around be born into a staunchly Catholic family. Be bowing before the Blessed Virgin Mary every morning! Even actually having been a Buddhist in your previous life you feel vaguely uneasy about it. On the other hand she might seem a beautiful Tara-like figure, who knows. So in a way this isn't anything deeply philosophical, it is almost on the level of biology, isn't it. That the human race expresses itself in all these different forms, different races, different cultures, nationalities, religions. So if you are a human being this is what you are essentially, basically, first and foremost. Why identify yourself exclusively with that particular form of humanity that you have assumed in this present life-time. So I think if people thought more in terms of energy and less in terms of specific expression, well there would be much less conflict in the world. This is not to say that these differences can be ignored on the level on which they do exist. For instance if you are a man or if you are a woman, well you can't ignore that, that is what you are on one particular level. But what is more important is that you are a human being. Sometimes people over-identify with their particular sex or nationality, as though they were that to the exclusion of everything else. And that is clearly an unhealthy tendency. Sometimes in dreams you might be something different, sometimes if you are a woman you might dream that you are a man. If you are white you might dream that you were black, if you were English you might dream that you were Indian, that is quite a good thing. It is another side of yourself. You might dream that you are an angel - even better, or a dakini - better still. But people do identify so very, very easily, don't they. You remember that article Vessantara wrote a couple of years ago which appeared in Shabda, those of you who were Order Members then, I think, will remember it. About the different groups.

Parami: The olive trees.

S: That's right, picking olives. How 'easy it was to start

thinking in terms of, 'our group picking olives from these trees and their group picking olives from those trees'. It is so deep rooted in human nature, but we have to overcome this. We certainly have to overcome it in terms of over-identification with centres and communities. Yes be loyal to your centre, fully support it but don't over-identify with it to such an extent that you lose sight of the Order or the Movement as a whole. In the same way don't over-identify with your own nationality to such an extent that you lose sight of humanity as a whole and the interests of humanity as a whole. So I think this is something that everybody has to struggle with, I don't think anybody is free of these tendencies in one form or another. Recently we have been hearing a lot about football hooliganism, well part, at least, of that is over-identification with a particular side, a particular team, a particular locality. So yes, we do have to think of ourselves as existing primarily as energy, primarily as consciousness and volition and only secondarily as form. There is a sort of exercise or practice that I stumbled upon myself, years ago, that I have spoken about sometimes. I don't know if any of you have heard me talk about it, stop me if everybody has heard about it. Years and years ago, in fact it was decades ago I think, I noticed something, I noticed, at least this was my own experience that when one woke up in the morning there was a moment, just as instant when you were aware, fully aware, but not aware of being any one or anything in particular, that comes later. You can see it coming. Has anybody had that experience? (V's: Yes) I think one should dwell upon that, even try to enlarge it. You just wake up, you are aware, you don't know who you are, you don't know where you are, you couldn't say just at that moment. You don't know whether you are a man or a woman, whether you are English or American or Japanese, or even a Buddhist. You are just, well you in the most basic sense, all the other things are super added. I think it is quite important to be able to have that kind of experience. I don't say it is a very lofty, spiritual, experience, it is just the raw, basic, human material. It is just you as an undifferentiated, unspecified or non-specific human being. Primitive man must have had that experience, or primitive woman must have had that experience quite a lot. Because primitive man or primitive woman didn't think of themselves as belonging to any particular nationality or caste or race or religion, they didn't have that. They were just conscious of themselves and conscious of their immediate surroundings, perhaps didn't even think of themselves, consciously, as human beings as distinct from animals. Children don't make that hard and fast distinction between themselves and animals, do they. It is as though, on our basic, human consciousness is superimposed all sorts of categorisations. Well perhaps that is not necessarily a bad thing in itself, but then we proceed to identify with ourselves as so categorised, and that cannot but lead to conflict among human beings. So perhaps it is good sometimes, not only to cultivate that moment of non-categorisation when we wake up, but also consciously make an effort to think of ourselves as not being what we normally think of ourselves as, as putting ourselves in the shoes of the other person, the other sex, or the other nationality, or the other age group - because sometimes young people find it very difficult to identify with older people and visa versa sometimes, if you have forgotten your own youth, if it is as long ago as that. You can find it very simple things, a young person can be very impatient sometimes that an older person can't keep up with

them when out walking. They just think that the old person is being difficult, they don't realise that the older person just can't keep up. It shows itself just in little things like this. Or you read something, maybe in the papers, the French have done something nasty, something in connection with the common market, against British interests, well your hackles might start rising automatically because you identify with being British and not with being French. If it is the other way around, if Britain has done something nasty where the French are concerned, then your hackles don't rise at all, in fact you are rather pleased! That shows your limitations, you should just try to cultivate a more impersonal sense of what is just and appropriate, regardless of these limitations and identifications. Anyway perhaps that is enough on that. Next is 'On Rebirth as an animal or in other realms or in certain forms

'In a seminar extract from a study on Trungpa's commentary on the Tibetan Book of the Dead you are rather doubtful as to whether consciousness which has become individualised sufficiently to be human could lapse back into the collective consciousness of the animal realm. (Yes, that is so.) Is consciousness more individualised in the realms of gods, titans, hungry ghosts and tormented beings? If so is it more likely for human consciousness to move into one of these realms?'

I think that would be the logical conclusion. It is almost as though the gods, the titans, the hungry ghosts, and tormented beings are sort of deformations of human consciousnesses. I am being a bit hypothetical here and I am not following tradition, because tradition doesn't consider this question. But it is rather as though, looking at it in more modern terms, the animal state proper represents the state which is inferior to the human state, but the gods, titans, hungry ghosts and tormented beings, or at least let us say, the titans, hungry ghosts and tormented beings, represent deviations from the human norm. It's sort of individuality, but twisted, alienated. You could say that perhaps the gods represent the next further stage on, at least in some cases, the gods represent the angelic state. But the titans represent a polarised state, because as I have mentioned before the male titans are represented as excessively male and the female titans or asuras as excessively female. They could represent consciousness which is polarised in that sort of way. The hungry ghosts, of course, are the extremely neurotic people and the tormented beings are those who have inflicted great harm on others which is now rebounding to themselves. So this could be a way of looking at it. In this case you have basically got animals, human beings and gods. The animals being lower than the human beings and the gods representing higher forms of existence. And the titans, the hungry ghosts and the tormented beings, sort of, spraying out from the human state to this or that extreme. Do you see what I am getting at? So in that case it would seem that it would seem that it is, in fact, for a human consciousness to move into one of these realms, certainly into one of the last three, that of the titans, hungry ghosts or tormented beings. You would only move into a god realm if you have definitely developed a higher, quasi-dhyanic sort of consciousness, a much more integrated and de-polarised consciousness. You could say the asuras represent an over-polarised consciousness and the hungry ghosts a consciousness in which

WOQ/A 85 5 - 15 89

intense craving predominates and the tormented beings one in which hatred predominates. Anyway the next question goes on to ask:-

'In this context, should the six realms be seen symbolically and psychologically or literally.'

Well tradition, of course, does take them quite literally but the fact that one can see them symbolically and psychologically doesn't, of course, necessarily exclude the literal meaning.

'For example there are many beings in human bodies who do not seem to have truly human consciousness in the way you define it on page 100'.

I would say it is not so much a difference of kind as a difference of degree. I think we are all well aware of that. Everybody in a human body does have some degree, however rudimentary, of self-consciousness. But in the case of certain human beings it is developed to a far greater extent than it is in the case of some people. One might say that human consciousness represents, or covers a whole range of degrees - it isn't just one particular point on a scale, it is a band on that scale. Some people are more at one end, others more at the other, probably the majority somewhere in the middle. Just as with sexuality, one might say, there are very few purely male or purely female types, more or sort of - not exactly intermediate - but in the case of most people it is a predominance of one or the other sex rather than this sex or that sex exclusively. That brings us to the third question:-

'What factors would determine one's consciousness associating itself with a female human form? If one thought it was more conducive to be reborn as a man what qualities and attitudes should one develop?'

First of all, 'what factors would determine one's consciousness associating itself with a female human form?' I thought in the case of this question, since I did have a look at them before hand, I had better cite an authority on the subject. (laughter) Because there are some very interesting observations at the beginning of this article on Women and Friendship. Well this is about women, before we get on to friendship, be ready for a shock ladies, some plain speaking here. (laughter) I'll only read the relevant bits, but they do throw, I think, some light, on the question, and if there is an argument, well it won't involve me. (laughter and comments) This is quite interesting actually, 'in what is generally referred to as traditional society, woman had very few options available to her, she usually married. Even in more intellectual circles she could not move freely unless she was married. She lived almost exclusively in the isolate units of her family. The family is a group which is concerned primarily with its own permanence, which minute interests and exclusive demands, in which the individual woman has to sacrifice her chance of any higher fulfilment. She would therefore, primarily, relate to her family, to her husband, and in particular to the other female members. Her friendships would be with her sisters, mother, aunts and daughters. She might, perhaps, develop a few friendships through women's clubs and, if she was lucky enough to belong to the 'lower classes,' with her neighbours

WOQ/A 85 5 - 16 / 6 - 1 90

as well. These friendships would be based on the women's mutual concern for their own families. They would last as long as each friend did not challenge the homeostasis of her friend's family. One's own family always came first, a woman's family was her domain and needed her protection from outside intrusions. The outcome of such a life would have been a complete immersion in the daily concerns and worries of the family, which, if she was not

careful, would become a matter of cultivating the cares of life, as it did Andre Gide's *La Symphonie Pastorale*. For the pastor's wife Amelie and his daughter Sarah, (and then quote from Andre Gide's) 'Sarah is not, alas, what her mother was at her age, when we were first engaged, but what the material cares of life have made her. I was going to say the cultivation of the cares of life, for Amelie certainly does cultivate them, I cannot see that Sarah has any interests that are not vulgar. Like her mother she allows herself to be entirely taken up with the paltry household matters. The very features of her face, unilluminated as they are by any inward play look dull and almost hard. She has no taste for poetry or for reading in general, I never overhear any conversation between her and her mother in which I have any inclination to take part.'

So in a way this contains an answer to the question, doesn't it, because the question is 'what factors would determine one's consciousness associating itself to the female human form?' It is over-involvement with exclusively family interests, and what Ashokasri calls, 'minute interests'. It means, the utter trivialities of life. I must say that I have been sometimes surprised, in the case of my own female relations. Because I notice that when they get together they talk about the most trivial matters, not that they are unintelligent women. If you get them on their own, one to one, they can talk quite intelligently, but get them together and they can spend hours talking about the most utterly trivial things, over and over again. So I think this is the sort of thing that one could say would result in rebirth in the female form. Overconcern with matters of family and reproduction of the species, babies, and so on. I say over involvement, over interest. And this is in line with Buddhist tradition, this is in fact what Buddhist tradition says. That if you whether male or female in the present life are over interested in perpetuating the species and family life, well you are more likely to be reborn as a woman than as a man, because you'll have a greater opportunity to fulfil those interests as a woman than as a man. So if you want, if anyone wants, maybe nobody does but if anyone wants not to be reborn as a woman, well one should avoid, perhaps, overpreoccupation with these...

(end tape 5)

Then this next part of the question is:-

'If one thought it was more conducive to be reborn as a man, what qualities and attitudes should one develop?'

Well clearly it would be the opposite. But of course the question does here arise. Some people might argue that those particular interests or involvements were the result of cultural conditioning. So, alright, supposing that they were, then what would it be that resulted in someone being reborn as a woman and not as a man? Has anybody got any ideas about that, because personally I don't have?

WOQ/A 85 6 - 2 91

V: What was the question?

S: The question was, supposing one maintains that this over-involvement in the family and over-preoccupation with minute interests is not anything inherent in the female psyche, as

it were, but is entirely the result of cultural conditioning, well then what is it that causes one particular psychic continuum to express itself in a male's body and another in a female's body.

V: j&yat~rabbd I would say that it might be the nurturing nature that we talked about earlier, in terms of being in touch with the earth and other creatures. And that sort of nurturing or lack of separateness, in that way.

S: Well certainly nurturing is quite an important element in the female psyche. If it is the psyche, some people might even say that that itself is the result of cultural conditioning. But one might even say that it is very difficult to ascertain what is cultural conditioning and what isn't. Because one isn't in a position to perform a scientific experiment. One can't create for human beings any situation where there is no cultural conditioning.

V: But does it matter if there is cultural conditioning, it still has an effect on you.

S: Ahh, but the original question is, how to make sure that one is not reborn as a woman if one doesn't wish to be reborn as a woman. So if you are to make completely sure you have not only to consider cultural conditioning but deeper, purely psychological traits and tendencies. So that it becomes important to know whether you have actually got down to those deeper traits and tendencies and are not just on the surface with what are purely matters of cultural conditioning.

Parami: Does that mean you would develop the opposite of nurturing?

S: What I would say would be that nurturing can exist on different levels. Because yes, there is the biological nurturing of the child, especially your own child, or other forms of life, but there is also a nurturing attitude psychologically speaking. You could say that when you teach meditation you have a nurturing attitude towards the people in your class. Perhaps you could say an artist has got a nurturing attitude.

Vimala: Why would an artist have a nurturing attitude.

S: Only today I was reading a book which Sobhana gave me yesterday about the Alexander technique. There is a very interesting reproduction of a portrait of Erasmus by Holbein. This is all as an illustration of poise, and Erasmus is writing and the author makes the point that Erasmus is not only sitting beautifully poised but he is sort of caressing, he is fondling his pen. This illustrates his attitude. Perhaps you can see it more clearly if you have got a lump of clay and you are going to produce a beautiful pot or an image. You don't just hit it like that (noise), you work it in a loving sort of way, nurturing sort of way. You are caressing it and you are producing this beautiful object. So an artist does have that sort of

WOQ/A 85 6 - 3 92

nurturing side to his life and his work. I think if you are having anything to do with human relations, especially on a spiritual level, you are nurturing people, you are nurturing them spiritually. So I think one can't, therefore, regard nurturing as the exclusive characteristic of the female, unless one limits it to its basic, biological function. So what one is really asking, is, what is it that makes the female a female? Because if you do believe that this is not just an accident that you are a male or a female, if you also believe in karma and rebirth, well

there must be something in you, so to speak, which causes you to be reborn as a male or reborn as a female. Well, what is that? Because if you want to be reborn as the one and avoid being reborn as the other, whichever it may be, you need to know that. So, what is it? (laughter) It's obviously a question of knowing who you are, because one ought to be able to say. For instance, if you want to reborn as a tiger, well how would you, whether male-or female, what sort of qualities would you cultivate? It's pretty obvious. Or if you wanted to be reborn as a monkey, it is pretty obvious. Right, so suppose you want to be reborn as a man, or as a woman, which particular qualities would you cultivate? Most people assume they know what it means to be a man, what it means to be a woman, so what is it?

Sanghadevi: Presumably you have to think of particular men that you would wish to be like, because men as such, within that there are lots of men that aren't very...

S: Yes, you would have to think of the normated man or normated female, as the case may be. So the question is, 'if one thought if one thought it was more conducive to be reborn as a man, what qualities and attitudes should one develop?' Well I suppose it means, since the question is asked by a woman, it really means how do you see or how do you think of men. Do you think of them as noble, disinterested, idealistic?

Parami: No (laughter)

S: Savage, brutal, exploitive, etc. etc. Well, it depends, presumably on how you see men or how you see women. Presuming that you are seeing them correctly of course.

Parami: It seems to be rather complex.

S: Mm. Because people agree that men and women are different and I think most people would agree that it isn't entirely a matter of cultural conditioning, there is some objective basis to this difference. That it has some psychical (So that if it was as a result of karma that you were born as a man or born as a woman, well you should be able to identify that particular psychical ingredient, those particular psychol- gical qualities that cause one to be born either as this or as that.

V: Do you have any suggestions?

S: Well the Buddhist tradition maintains that it is as a result of a greater or lesser degree of interest in the whole business and process of reproduction of the species. In as much as it is the female that has..., in the life of the female

~OQ/A 85 6 - 4 93

that this takes up a larger space, as it were, than in the life of the male. This is in traditional Buddhist terms. (pause) But it is an inter-~sting question if one thinks in terms of rebirth. If one accepts the hypothesis or the thesis of rebirth and if one is thinking, if one is considering seriously the options that are open to and if one believes that one can affect them by one's behaviour in this life itself. Well, clearly, what should one do? What particular

qualities should one cultivate? Also there is the point that, as a human being, on the psychological level, you want a balance of qualities, you want to be just a human being, regardless of your physical form. That is the primary consideration, the consideration of physical sex being ancillary to that.

Vajrasuri: I think it has got something to do with a conscious form of creative endeavour. Quitpurposely put into action, whereas in the most instinctive<sup>1/4</sup>-e'vel, that creative act comes well, the process starts and it just carries itself along. Whereas once starts operating on a conscious creative level, you start making decisions.

S: So basically you are saying what Buddhist tradition says. You are actually restating the traditional Buddhist position. In terms of a switchover from actual instinctual creativity, which I tend to call production or productivity, to intelligent and aware creativity.

Vajrasuri: I don't think its so limited to male or female, the gende% male or female, because I think males have a strong biological urge as well.

S: Oh, yes, there is no doubt about that. But anyway, if that is so, then still one is left with the question, what is it that is distinctively male, in psychological terms and want is distinctively female, which causes one to be reborn either as this or as that?

Jayaprabha: I wonder if you get..., with men, it seems that they sometimes are able to act without consideration of other people (S: Yes) Whereas with women, we tend to take the whole situation into account, which again might be this thing where, if you had that nurturing responsibility, you would have to take the whole into account.

S: It does seem, from what I have noticed of the way women operate in society or in the social situation, they are more concerned to safeguard the equilibrium of the social order to which they belong. This is why very often you find that women dislike conflicts between the men who belong to their particular group and will always try to play down such conflicts or to smooth th&t over. Almost sometimes to the extent of peace at any price. Whereas sometimes a man just won't care what disruption he causes so long as he maintains his point. Because he feels very strongly that he is in the right. Whereas the woman might feel what does it matter who is in the right or who is in the wrong, the main thing is to keep the peace and to prevent the society or the group being disrupted too badly. So women always seem to try and contain any sort of damage that might be done by the, apparantly,more individualistic males. I think one can say that, certainly on the level of the

WOQ/A 85 6 - 5 94

family and the smaller social group.

Vajrasuri: It comes, perhaps, from males protecting their property and the female needs to protect the child.

S: I am not quite sure that that distinction really holds good because very often a man regards his wife and child as his property, and (treats?) them as such. But what I was thinking was that it doesn't seem easy to identify the female factor, or the male factor come to

that, and therefore not easy to determine the cause of future rebirth in that direct sort of way.

So perhaps one ought to adopt a slightly different point of view and say that whether one is male or whether one is female what one really needs to do is to develop as an individual to the furthest possible extent that you can in this life, in this body, whatever it happens to be. That is the main thing, and perhaps leave to subordinate karma factors the determination of whether you are reborn as a male or whether you are reborn as a female. Because if in this life you have made that effort to be an individual, well, you will be reborn, presumably, either as a more individual man or a more individual woman. And it is the individuality is, after all, the main thing. Even if one or the other is a greater or a lesser handicap, let's say for the sake of argument that one might be, well the fact that you are in any case born as more of an individual will mean that you are able to counteract that anyway. So that it won't really matter so much. So the emphasis is still on being an individual, because one can at least be sure of that whatever else one isn't sure about. Anyway, we have come to the last group or the last batch of questions. Questions on transference of consciousness and Bodhisattvas choosing rebirth on another plane.

Could you explain what consciousness transference is, and give names of specific Yogins who have practiced it? (Oh dear!) In the life of Naropa, Tilopa in one life manifested different forms, an old hag, a leper etc. Would a Bodhisattva who entered, say, a hell realm simultaneously manifest the form of a hell being as skilful means and a higher form more appropriate to the quality of the stream of consciousness which has developed?

S: Let's deal with these bit by bit. Consciousness transference. I could speak of this, but these aren't quite traditional terms, as a vertical transference and a horizontal transference. A vertical transference is where you transfer your consciousness to a higher level. This we are trying to do all the time through meditation and in other ways. But there are certain specific techniques for doing it in a rather special way, especially say, transferring one's consciousness to the pure land, there are a number of such practices. And when one speaks of consciousness transference in the higher, more spiritual sense, it is that that one usually means. There are various visualisation exercises connected with this sort of practice. One visualises, for instance, one's consciousness in the form of a mantra, the letters of a mantra. Usually hum. One then imagines that visualised mantras as progressing up one's median nerve and leaping out of the top of one's head

and leaping into the realm of Amitabha. There are a number

WOQ/A 85 6 - 6 95

of practices of this sort. So this is the vertical kind of consciousness transference, and it is believed that if one has done this during one's life then one will be able to do it, or it will just happen at the time of one's death, which will mean one is reborn in the pure land. What one might call horizontal transference is when one transfers one's consciousness into another body, whether human or animal, and, as it were, takes over that body, ejects or squeezes out, or superimposes oneself upon the existing consciousness. This is another kind of consciousness transference, this is sometimes described as a form of magic and there are references to this in the life of Milarepa, aren't there? This is not of any value as regards one's personal spiritual development, though it may be a power that one develops, or an ability that

one develops which one uses as a skilful means for certain purposes, but it does not contribute to one's personal development. It is only the vertical transference, as I have called it, which does contribute in that way.

I have heard that in answer to a question about teaching consciousness transference to Order Members, you made a connection between that and fidelity; continuity of thoughts etc. not bound by physical. Could you say any more about that?

S: I don't remember referring in that particular way, though I have certainly spoken in terms of fidelity as representing a sort of continuity of consciousness. Perhaps I should say a few words about that. What is the real test of fidelity, as between people, between human beings, that is between friends? The great test is absence. It is very easy to think of someone when they are present before you. But if they are not present it is much more difficult. An animal, apparently, finds it difficult to 'think' of another animal when it is not actually present, except perhaps in the case of more advanced animals like dogs, especially those who have had human masters. There are all sorts of stories in that connection. But broadly speaking animals who only have sense consciousness aren't able to form the idea of another animal that is not actually present to their senses. A human being can do this because a human being has reflexive consciousness. So you have got these two things. You have got sense consciousness and you have got reflexive consciousness. But human beings, though they develop reflexive consciousness, sense consciousness is still present. So fidelity is only possible to the degree that reflexive consciousness is able to predominate over sense consciousness. Do you see what I am getting at? Because, supposing you have a friend and you are very fond of that friend, attached to that friend - I am using the word attachment in a neutral sense. Supposing that friend has to go away on a journey, you don't forget them and why is it that you don't forget them? It is because you have got reflexive consciousness, you are not limited to sense consciousness, even though the person is not actually present before you physically you can imagine them. You can remember them, you are not limited, you are not bound to the present place and the present time. So supposing you are bearing that absent person in mind, then you are faithful to them, you have got fidelity. In other words your relationship with them transcends their actual physical presence. The suspension of their physical presence does not interrupt the continuity of the relationship. In other words you are faithful to them. Again, there is another article - here, this one is by

WOQ/A 85 6 - 7 96

Vajraketu and it is called 'A Friendship'. He is speaking of the friendship between himself, Ruciraketu and Ratnaketu, but especially between himself and Ruciraketu. And he is speaking of how he came back after two and a half years in India, and he corresponded very, very little with Ruciraketu or Ruciraketu with him because Ruciraketu just doesn't write letters, he is not a scribe as it were. But rather to Vajraketu's surprise when he met up with Ruciraketu after a two and half year absence, during which time only one or two letters had passed between them, he felt as though their friendship had progressed, in a quite strange sort of way. You will have to read the article for yourself, no doubt you will in due course, but it was because that mutual fidelity was there, they were faithful to their friendship, it had gone on developing even though they weren't in physical contact or even exchanging letters to any great extent. So one can see that if one wants to develop as an individual and if one wants not to be limited to sense consciousness, not be limited to the present time and the present place, if one wants to be an individual one must develop fidelity. Fidelity to other human

beings. It's not just a case of 'out of sight out of mind', you must deeply cherish your friends and be mentally faithful to them, and in the case of a sexual relationship, perhaps physically faithful too. And that will strengthen your sense of continuity, as it were, through space and through time. It will strengthen your sense of individuality in the true sense. How I connected this, if I did in fact do so, with transference of consciousness, I am really not quite sure, I can't remember if I did this. But no doubt there is a general connection, because in the transference of consciousness also, which is a higher development, one might say, of ordinary self consciousness, you transcend space and you transcend time. So there is a sort of connection. But I see fidelity as very, very important; fidelity in this sense. As representing the fact that you are operating on a level of self consciousness and not just on a level of sense consciousness. Otherwise with some people, some fascinating stranger comes along and they are just swept off their feet and they forget about everybody. Maybe their friend, or their boyfriend or girlfriend, or husband or wife, is away for a few weeks, they forget all about them. The fascinating stranger just sweeps them off their feet, it's the impression of the present moment. The sense impression is stronger than, or sense consciousness is stronger than self consciousness. This is what it really means, the image of the absent one is so faint in comparison with the image of the present one that the present one entirely overpowers the image of the absent one. Because you are living much more in the senses than in the mind. So really to be faithful, to practice fidelity really means to live more on the level of mind than on the level of the senses. More on the level of self consciousness and less on the level of sense consciousness. This is why fidelity, or the practice of fidelity is so important. Not for any legalistic or moralistic reasons, but for psychological and spiritual reasons. There cannot be any development without continuity. And if you, yourself, are not continuous as an individual how can there be any continuity of development. Or how can your relationships develop, your friendships develop, unless you keep them up and they are continuous? Do you see what I am getting at.

WOQ/A 85 6 - 8      97

Parami: It was actually me that asked that question, and I had presumed when I heard that this remark had been attributed to you, that it was to do with one's links as an Order Member. And that if one had fidelity to the Order. And I had tied it up to other remarks you had made about rebirth or re-becoming as a spiritual community. That was my presumption from the comment I'd heard so I wanted to hear if you had any more to say.

S: That's not quite transference of consciousness, but I did talk about something like that on some other occasion when somebody asked 'supposing you want to be reborn with someone, in a future life?'. I said the Buddha had dealt with that already in the case of a husband and wife who had asked the question. He said that if you cultivate the same thoughts, the same words and the same deeds, obviously you will have a common karma, or karma vipaka and you will be reborn together. So if you want to be reborn as a member of the Order, not that you can actually be reborn as a member of the Order, but reborn within hailing distance of the Order, well yes, cultivate actions of body, speech and mind which are characteristic of those of an Order Member. It is as simple as that. You will be reborn along with those people who have, at present, the same intellect, the same mental states, the same activities as you have yourself. Same in quality, not necessarily the same in outward form. So I think it is highly likely, under the law of karma and rebirth, that Order Members will be reborn in contact with one another, to the extent that they have been real and genuine Order Members.

I think it is inevitable. It might have happened already, who knows. Some people do have the experience, coming in contact with the Order or the Movement generally that it is really like a homecoming. So who knows, we can't say, perhaps some of us have been in contact with one another before and that is why we get on so well at present. We know that some get on less well even though they share the same ideals. Sometimes it happens that you have the same ideals as other Order Member but you just can't get on with them. It may be that you have come together for the first time in this life, you have yet to make the personal adjustment and develop the personal friendships. So far you have just got the ideals in common and they don't always, unfortunately, carry you very far. But in the case of other Order Members, maybe you get on with them really well, because not only do you share the same ideals, but you have already, perhaps, in previous lives, established a personal contact. So you find it easy to get on with one another. I am speaking of real getting on, not just of personality type compatibility based on common interests and so on. I am speaking of something deeper than that. Sometimes it does seem as though you are carrying on the thread of previous relationships and friendships.

Sridevi: Would you say that Order Metta is a practice that would make this more likely?

S: I am sure it does, because you are all tuned into the same wavelength, as it were. It's a common metta, spirit or feeling of metta which is enveloping you all, sometimes at the same moment. So that cannot but be generating, for want of a better term - which is not quite a traditional term, a sort of 'collective' (inverted commas) karma.

WOQ/A 85 6 - 9      98

Padmasuri: This is related to something earlier on, is there any transference of consciousness when you give the visualisation practice to new Dharmacaris?

S: People have asked this before. I would say that in a general way transference of consciousness is going on all the time, in the sense that we are all influencing one another. Whatever I say influences all of you, whatever you say influences me, it influences all the rest of you. But there are~degrees of intensity and on an occasion like, when someone is given a visualisation practice for the first time, or even when someone is giving a lecture and it is given with full concentration and in sincerity; I am not only saying in my own case but in the case of Order Members giving talks, a tremendous impression is created. And yes, one can even speak of a transference of consciousness. Because you do, as it were, give something of yourself. It is not that you are affecting the other person from a distance, this is why we speak of transference of consciousness, something of you actually comes across and becomes part, so to speak, of that other person. I think within the Movement, and especially within the Order, we are interacting like that all the time. Everybody is giving and everybody is receiving all the time and hopefully in such a way that as a result of this mutual giving and mutual receiving there is progressive heightening and intensification of our level of consciousness. Even a purification of our level of consciousness. I have said, I think, on previous occasions, that when I give talks and give lectures I certainly don't feel that I am just giving it to a whole lot of passive people. I certainly feel that there is an interplay, a give and take sort of situation. And I think this is what happens more and more. If the audience is passive, strange to say, paradoxically, you can give less, it limits you, it doesn't enlarge your opportunities. If the audience is responsive and itself contributing, you can give more because you are stimulated to give more. Many of you must have found that taking classes.

Even in a humble beginners meditation class you can feel that. It's a giving and receiving.

So, yes, I would say that when people are given visualisation practices and mantras and so on, there is a transference of consciousness. But again one must be careful not to enhalo this with a false mystique. In a way it isn't anything special, perhaps it is a special case of something which is quite general and in fact it goes on all the time. To go back to the example of the beginners meditation class. When you are explaining just the technique and you are talking about metta or mindfulness, you are having an influence. Something of your consciousness, your awareness, your attitude is passing over to the people who are listening, presuming that they are listening in a reasonably receptive way. It is a mild sort of transference of consciousness. It isn't just a reading out of the instructions from the book, you all know that from your own experience. You impart something, and that in some ways is the most important part of it. Even when it is just, almost a sort of social gathering at the centre, if you are all aware of the fact that you are Order Members and speaking and behaving as Order Members, something is imparted to newcomers and guests and visitors. In the same way when people visit your community and the way that you are living, and the sort of vibrations that you are giving off, as it were. It is a sort of mild transference of consciousness. But yes, certainly at certain times, on certain special

WOQ/A 85 6 - 10 99

occasions that occurs in a heightened form.

Sanghadevi: Do you mind going back to this section about how a Bodhisattva would help the hell beings?

S: A Bodhisattva is supposed to be endowed with skilful means so he would help them in the way that was appropriate to that particular situation. It is probably very difficult to say how he would do that. The possibility mentioned here is 1 would a Bodhisattva who entered a hell realm simultaneously manifest the form of a hell being as a skilful means, and a higher form more appropriate to the quality of the stream of consciousness which has developed? I would say that in the second case it is not a question of manifesting because that is what he is. We musn't be over-literal here. If a Bodhisattva appears in a hell realm, well when we say he appears it means he is visible in that hell realm, that is to say he is visible to the beings in that hell realm, that is to say he has got a body like theirs, otherwise he wouldn't be visible to them. So on the one hand you have got the form that he assumes in order to be present there at all, and on the other hand you have got his own form, in a manner of speaking, which corresponds to his real level of being, his real level of development, whatever that is. But that is not only the case of Bodhisattvas. In the case of the Bodhisattva he is aware of that higher form, as it were, at the same time ~hat he is aware of the lower form in which he is operating. In our case, also, going back to what I said at the very begining, we have got these other dimensions, we have got this, as it were, higher form too, but in our case our connection with it is much less and we are usually not conscious of it at all, we just know that it is there. We are only conscious of the form that we have assumed in this particular world and we identify ourselves with that, but in some other world, in some other realm we might say, there is our true form, speaking metaphorically, that we have not yet made contact with, not aware contact with.

Vajrasuri: In another dimension.

S: Mmm. This is one way of thinking of it. It is not thinking of it in purely developmental terms, but this is a way that we can actually think of it. I think we have to be careful about thinking of it in this way because we don't want to think 'oh well that form is there already so there is nothing for me to develop, nothing that I have to do'. It is true that there is that danger, but nonetheless it is also true that again, in a sense, we do exist already on another, sort of, higher level, with which we have to connect our present personality, the one we identify ourselves with. It is an alternative way of looking at it. It is as though we are beings who have been reborn in a hell realm and forgotten that we are Bodhisattvas (laughter)

'Quote:- "A Bodhisattva who, out of compassion, chooses to be reborn on a sub-human plane." Do you mean here literally an animal or a more animal like realm of human existence?

S: No I think here I meant literally. Because one does have references to this sort of thing in Buddhist scriptures, Buddhist texts. I believe I have even come across references to Bodhisattvas being reborn, if that is the word, as inanimate objects. I think there is something to that effect in the

WOQ/A 85 6 - 11 100

Vimalakirti Nirdeśa.

'Are there canonical references to the Bodhisattva being reborn in sub-human planes?'

S: Not really, not to the Bodhisattva being reborn in sub-human planes. The Jataka stories, of course, do contain such references, but the stories as distinct from the verses of the Jataka book are not considered to be strictly canonical. As far as I remember, I'll have to check this but I think I am correct, that all those passages which speak of the previous births or lives of a Bodhisattva, speak of him as having been either a righteous monarch or a sage, a teacher.

Sanghadevi: So you are referring to Mahayanist texts when you said there are sources where Bodhisattvas

S: No, I was talking about the Pali Jataka book, but in that Thai Jataka book it is only the verses that are considered canonical. And the question was about the canonical references. In the Jataka book there are verses and there are the stories connected with the verses. The stories are not considered canonical, only the verses. So that in that sense there are no canonical references to the Bodhisattva as having been reborn as an animal, but there are many non-canonical references. Because many of these non-canonical Jataka stories identify the Bodhisattva with the animal hero of that particular episode. Maybe a hare, maybe a deer, monkey and so on. I have written something about this in my lecture on the Bodhisattva ideal, haven't I? As to what this actually means or represents.

Sanghadevi: I thought you said with the previous question, you said towards the end that there were sources which talk about Bodhisattvas being reborn

S: Ahh, yes, outside the Pali literature I think there are. Vwon't be sure that it is canonical Buddhist literature, that is to say Mahayana sutras, but certainly in popular Buddhist literature there are many such references, yes. Very often the non-canonical Jataka stories, whether in Pali or in some other language, are taken by many people to be actually canonical. But strictly speaking it isn't so. The strictly canonical sources seem to show the Buddha as Bodhisattva being born or reborn either as righteous monarch or as a great sage. That seems to be about it.

Jayaprabha: Bhante, I don't think I understood something you said about Vimala-Kirti and a Bodhisattva being 'reborn' as an inanimate object. Is that what you said? (S: yes) But that would be a Mahayana canonical text.

S: Yes, but when I said Bodhisattva I didn't mean the Bodhisattva, that is to way who became Gotama the Buddha, but a Bodhisattva in general. I seem to remember references of that sort, the possibility of a Bodhisattva, if it was a skilful thing to do, being reborn as a tree or a stone. It's very strange isn't it (laughter) what would it mean, how would the consciousness be connected? But presumably the tree or the stone would have a particular kind of ...

wOQ/A 85 6 - 12

101

V: Could be a sacred shrine.

S: Yes. I remember a strange experience I had, strange in a way, when I went years ago to that Tantra exhibition at the Haywood gallery.

(End side 1)

. . . very large round polished stone, naturally polished that are picked up in river beds in India, and are actually worshipped. To me these objects were really the most interesting things in the whole exhibition. Because there was a definite, strange, feeling too them, which is very difficult to explain. They had something, those stones. You could say that it was because they had been worshipped by human beings but I couldn't actually think that it was that. They were about so big, a rough egg shape but very smooth and very, very grey, almost like gun-metal. I don't know if you know what gun-metal is, you might have seen gun-metal ashtrays, almost bluey grey. They had a so~~~o~,~ personality, so one could really imagine, as it were')~aving a special link with a stone of this sort, or even in a manner of speaking being reborn as a stone. I don't know if you've had that sort of feeling, anyway we must transcend anthropomorphic limitation. (laughter), not to say anthropocentric and (galocentric?) limitations. I've had this sort of feeling with trees, I can understand people worshipping sacred trees because I remember especially when I was in New Zealand, I was taken to the (kaurie?) forest up north. I was taken to see a tree which was called in Maori the king of the forest, you probably know what it means in Maori, and it really was. You've seen it? It occurred to me when I looked at it, it's the biggest living thing I have ever seen, it was bigger than a whale. So with the possible exception of certain sequoia trees in the states, it's probably the biggest living thing in existences. And it actually felt like a sort of personality, it didn't feel like a thing. But not a personality in the sentimental sense, like you can

sometimes personalise things and think of animals in human terms in a very subjective, sentimental sort of way, not that at all. But you felt that it was a living being with a definite consciousness, almost an individual consciousness of its own. So perhaps it is a bit of a prejudice on our part that a higher consciousness can only be associated - and I use the word association being a very loose, general one - with a human body, with a human form. Perhaps it can come into some kind of special relationship with a tree or a stone. Maybe that sort of feeling is of the essence of, or part of Pantheism, which is what we were talking about earlier on.

Vajrasuri: Ayre's rock, in the middle of Australia has a very impressive quality. It's a huge big, single massive rock. It's the biggest rock in the world.

S: Some people say that certain mountains have sort of presences, almost personalities. But not in the narrow, subjective human sense. So perhaps we ought to open ourselves a little to these wider possibilities. It does occur to me as we have been talking this evening, that we really do limit ourselves. We think of ourselves as this or as that, identify ourselves with this or that. We don't really need to do that at all. It's just a habit we have got into. I think we can probably be much more conscious of other forms of life. Not just

standing apart from them and looking at them from the outside,

WOQ/A 85 6 - 13 102

but empathising much more with them. I talked about the artists and the bamboos, years ago, I think everyone is familiar with that. We should really try to have that sort of feeling with regard to everything. Even with regard to stones, even with regard to minerals. Years ago, when I was in Kalimpong, I wrote an article which unfortunately I lost and it was never published. It was on animism and I remember one of the things I said in that, the main point was, that I thought it was much better to think that the whole universe was alive than that the whole universe was dead. Otherwise we tend to think of ourselves as human beings living in a dead universe, a mechanical universe, whereas it isn't like that at all. It's a living universe, maybe human beings are more alive than other parts of the universe, but it's only really a difference of degree. It's not a total difference of kind. I think at least we should be able to feel this with regard to animals and plants. Unless we get this feeling more it looks as though we are going to destroy the very environment, the very ecosystem on which we depend. We are busily engaged in sawing off the very branch on which we are sitting. And we think it is really very clever to do this. If people point out to us that is what we are doing we say that they are alarmist or sentimentalists or something of that sort.

Parami: You said a little bit about your feelings about animism in the outlines of Mahayana Buddhism seminar. You compare it with Pantheism and talk about the differences, where it ties up with the Dharma.

S: Ahh, I had forgotten about that, yes. Pantheism is a more intellectual version of the same thing. When I talked years ago, perhaps rather vaguely about paganism, and having to be a pagan before you could be a Buddhist, I think it is more that sort of thing that I was getting at. I wasn't talking so much in terms of morals, but in terms of your feeling for life,

your feeling for the other living things in the world, feeling a connection with them. Not alienated from them not completely different from them. Yes human beings are different from them but they are not completely different.

Vajrasuri: Are you talking about nature spirits?

S: No, not necessarily, just plain common or garden trees and plants and flowers. I have read some strange things about flowers, but again I must say I also get a strange feeling about flowers, that there is something quite odd about them. (laughter) It is almost as though they have got personalities but not in the silly, sentimental sense, you don't see little faces and little eyes, that is just insulting them, to make them look like pseudo human beings. But they have in a way a definite, for want of a better term, personality of their own. I hope you don't think Bhante has gone (drowned in laughter) in old age. But I can understand people thinking or speaking in terms of nature spirits but I think even that is a bit, as it were, mechanical. It's as though you can't think of the thing itself as alive you have got to think of it as inhabited by a spirit, a humanoid spirit which gives it life. I don't experience it like that at all, maybe some people do, maybe it's a mode of experiencing. But I personally can feel things as definitely alive without thinking of them as inhabited by flower spirits or tree spirits and all the

WOQ/A 85 6 - 14 103

rest of it. Just as I can think of you as being alive without thinking of you as being inhabited by a Parami spirit or a Dhammadinna spirit and so on. But it does seem to me to be more and more important and I feel this quite strongly living at Padmaloka and I see lots of vegetation, lots of green things, lots of trees and plants. And I know every tree and every plant individually, just like I know individual people. I get quite surprised when I hear people talking in a quite casual manner about, 'maybe we will chop down that tree', and I shudder. It's rather like saying let's do away with Ratnadakini, it'll make the room a bit tidier. (Drowned out by laughter) dreadful idea, but here they are talking about, 'let's cut down that tree and make a bit more space Seems to me it's much the same sort of thing, do you see what I mean? (V's: Yes) I don't mean we should go to sentimental extremes but at least, as I said, we should have that awareness of the livingness of other living things. As I get older I feel this more, I don't know whether there is any reason for that. I didn't feel it so strongly years ago, or at least not so consciously. But I always have had a strong feeling for animals. As a boy I liked animals and I was never afraid of spiders and creepy crawly things, I loved creepy crawly things. Hold them on my hand and watch them, pick up spiders and never thought anything of it. But a lot of other people, I noticed, didn't have that sort of feeling. I always liked animals and had, as a small boy, quite a collection of animals of various kinds. Maybe it is my second childhood. (laughter) But also, I think, if one has that sort of feeling more and more strongly it becomes more and more difficult warm blooded animals. I don't feel any compunction about eating vegetable, I think that is quite different. Perhaps if one was more sensitive one would feel the same way about vegetables, but fortunately I haven't reached that stage. It seems to me; Dhammadinna gave me a copy of the Three Jewels and I read the pages that you have been studying, and I couldn't help thinking that I have actually expressed things very, very clearly, but in a very different way from what I am expressing them now. It is as though, this evening, not discussing things on this, in a way, intellectual level, but discussing on a different level or in different terms. In a way much more feelingful. Though both expressions say the same thing or point in the same direction. I think it would be a

mistake if anyone was to read this and think it was just an intellectual presentation. It was just ideas, because obviously the Buddha's teaching is very much more than that. And it does become more and more important to feel things and not just to think things. I have had the idea several times recently that perhaps it is a mistake to write about Buddhism in prose. Perhaps one should write about it in poetry instead, if one is able to that is. I felt this especially in connection with the poem I wrote about Mahadhammavira, because this did express quite adequately what I wanted to say and I surely couldn't have done that through the prose medium. And I feel in many ways that poetry is a more integrated medium of expression than prose, or than prose usually is, at least. Because in the case of poetry you have got so many other elements. The emotional element is much stronger, the element of rhythm is there - I think that is very important from the emotional point of view too, at least in the more traditional type of poetry. So I have sometimes though recently that maybe one should try to communicate

W0Q/A 85 6 - 15 104

more through poetry than through prose. Perhaps when one has something to say, say it in poetry and give a poetry reading instead of giving a lecture. Whether I'll be able to do that I just don't know, probably not, because it is not easy to be a poet. But a poet does see things in a special kind of way, maybe this is the last point I will make but it does tie up with what I have been talking about. I noticed that when I get into a poetic mood, for want of a better term, that is a mood in which writing of poetry comes easily and naturally to me I feel a quite special kind of empathy with life, with my surroundings, with nature - mainly with nature. It is on account of that empathy that one experiences a sort of rhythm, or it is on account of one's experience of that kind of rhythm that one experiences the empathy; and it is the experience of that rhythm and that empathy that gives rise to the poem. It doesn't mean that you are necessarily a good poet, because you can have this kind of basic experience quite genuinely but not be able to extend it into an actual, good, worthwhile poem. But you can't be any kind of poet, I think, good, bad or indifferent unless you have this basic sort of experience. I have written about it in one of my letters to SHABDA, do you remember any of you? This was years ago. I notice this, that when I get into this sort of poetic mood it is as though the line of demarcation between myself and nature is just no longer there. Not myself in any higher reality, no, that's a different thing, but myself and nature. And it is out of that sort of experience of empathy and rhythm - I can only call it that - that the poetry comes, and under those circumstances comes very easy and naturally. I have said in that letter that it is at that moment is it as though everything you touch turns to poetry just like everything that Midas touched turned to gold. In that frame of mind everything turns to poetry, that is your experience. I think that was the experience of the old bards, this is what a poet really was. A poet is not someone who writes in verse, a poet is someone who experiences nature in a particular kind of way but there are very few such people nowadays and even those who do write poetry experience this state only intermittently. But I am sure that in ancient times there were people who lived in this state all the time. I also think that this is the state in which the real pagan lives. So you can see, even, the real pagan would be someone to whom poetry came quite naturally, it would be his or her ordinary speech. I think this is a very important level of development, one that we don't usually think in terms of and don't usually experience.

Samata: It also makes me think of Carl Jung, his stories of him living in his cottage(

). He seemed to feel that it was a very important to have a relationship with matter, with nature.

S: I must say I feel that quite strongly. I probably feel it most strongly, at least at present or the last few years, in connection with plants and flowers. Not so much animals and stones, though as I think everybody knows, I do like stones and I certainly like animals. But maybe plants, trees and flowers are easier to come into contact with. I think if I lost my Cheeseplant which I have in my study I think I would probably quite miss it! Anyway I think that's enough of that.

WOQ/A 85 7 - 1 105

(Next session) As usual the questions have been divided into batches. So we start off with questions of human rarity, in other words the rarity of human birth.

'One way of trying to appreciate the human situation and its distinctive significance is by seeing that it is comparatively rare, rare as a tortoise coming up for air in the ocean once every hundred years and poking its head through a yoke.' I have found this quality difficult to appreciate. I wonder if this is maybe due to the result of living in an environment predominantly surrounded by people with little other life forms around us. Is empathy with many other life forms important for the development of the appreciation of the rarity of the human situation? (then something added on in another handwriting) Could you suggest ways in which we could develop a feeling for this rarity?

S: Strictly speaking of course it is not so much a question of rarity as preciousness. Though, of course, usually things which are rare are considered to be precious. But human life is precious even when it isn't rare. It's true, as the first questioner says, that if you are surrounded by lots of other forms of life then it is easier to appreciate the rarity of human life. And because you appreciate the rarity of human life you can appreciate the preciousness of human life. Where obviously, when there are lots of other people around and perhaps very few representatives of other forms of life, human life doesn't seem so rare and therefore it doesn't seem so precious. But it is precious not just because of its rarity, even when it is rare, but on account of its Potential for development. So perhaps it isn't surprising that some people don't find the simile or the parable of the turtle very illuminating or even very convincing. What one has really got to appreciate is the value of human life, and human life is valuable on account of its potential for development. It is this that one has got to become more alive to. This subsidiary question says, 'could you suggest ways in which we could develop a feeling for this rarity', or this preciousness, this value, perhaps we should say. One way that I can think of, in fact the only way that I can think of at the moment is, that you just have to reflect on the possibilities of human existence, the things that a human being can do. The ways in which a human being can develop, the ways in which a human being can grow. Just reflect it would be not to utilise any of your opportunities, not to develop the potential that you do have. Supposing you have the potential to be a great musician, what a pity if you don't develop it. Supposing you have a potential to meditate, what a pity if you don't develop it. Maybe you have a potentiality to draw or to paint, what a Pity if you don't develop it because by developing those potentialities which are within you, you have a much fuller and richer and more worthwhile experience of life. What a pity to tie yourself down, what a pity to thwart the process of your own development. One might even say that

the development is something which is worthwhile for its own sake. Or one might say that if life is worth living it is all the more worth living the more truly it is life, or the more refined the forms in which it manifests itself. So I think it is not easy to have an appreciation of the value of life, the value of your individual human life if you don't have some inkling of your potential. So I think it

WOQ/A 85 7 - 2 106

really is a matter of coming to some understanding of the potential that you have, that you can do more, you can do better than you are doing at present. You need to reflect more seriously on the fact - and this I have mentioned on many occasions - that we are operating only with a fraction of our potential much of the time. We could do so much more, we could do so much better in so many different ways. So it is not a question of the numerical rarity of human life, that is only a skilful means to make us appreciate the value of human life. It is the value of human life that we have to remind ourselves of, and we can do that by considering what wonderful potentialities each and every human being does have. But I can't help wondering what it is that makes people not realise or prevents them from realising that they do, in fact, have a potential. Perhaps the way in which one has been brought up has got a lot to do with it, the attitudes of other people towards one. If you have been told since you were small that you were stupid and dull, you could never be of any good. Well clearly that is not going to encourage you to think of yourself as having a wonderful human potential. Maybe we should encourage one another more, encourage one another to think in terms of actualising potentialities that are in fact already there in many cases. It is basically a question, again, I suppose, of just appreciating the value of human life or the significance of human life, was the question, of course. I think in connection with these traditional parables, the thing is we have to ask ourselves what they are really getting at. In this particular case what the parable of the turtle is getting at is simply trying to help as to realise the value and significance of human life, or as I have said the potential of human life. It is not giving us a lesson in biology, it is not trying to tell us how many human beings there are in the world to every so many flies and so on, or fish, that is not the purpose at all. I think lots of people, maybe the majority of people don't realise how valuable human life is, how precious it is, and therefore what potential it has. Peoples range of options is usually very, very limited, so they don't really make much of themselves, very often. Though perhaps, again, nowadays, more people do have opportunities to develop themselves, as we say, than perhaps ever before in history. Because they have got leisure and they have got things like adult evening classes, where people who didn't have the opportunity of further education when they were younger can go, where they can study literature, the arts, music, develop whatever talents they have, at almost any age now. This has not been the case before, we are very fortunate now. However quite a lot of people don't take advantage of these opportunities that perhaps should be taking advantage of them. People seem much more concerned about not having a job than not using the facilities to develop themselves. People seem to think it is a disgrace to be out of work, but not that it is a disgrace not to develop the potential that you do actually have. It seems rather strange. I would have felt, if I had been in that sort of position I think I would have been really overjoyed. Because I didn't have to work, I could draw the dole and I could go to all sorts of adult day and evening classes and spend my time reading the classics and studying comparative religion and philosophy, and not having to work, how wonderful. But lots of people, maybe millions of people, don't think in that sort of way. They haven't realised the true

value of human life. They think that the value of human life consists in your capacity for work in the sense of remunerative employment, that is the work of the human being, that is what human life is all about, which is really ridiculous. Work is important, yes, earning a living is important, and right livelihood is still more important but there are other things in life~~ too and working is not the be all and end all of one's existence. And I think there would be much less hooliganism and vandalism and things like that sort if people's energies were channeled more into creative directions. So yes, we do have quite a lot of facilities these days, in this country, but not enough people are using them or realise, in a way, the human necessity of using them. I hope I am not being arealistic, but I think if one approached, even maybe soccer hooligans in the right sort of way, one would be able to develop some sort of higher interest in them. I don't think anybody is beyond help or beyond hope. Anyway let's pass onto another question, still on that subject.

How does a stream of consciousness ever manage to enter a human realm? It seems so difficult from what you say about the beings in the different realms.

S: I wouldn't say it was difficult at all, I would say That it was quite natural. Because, why do you enter a human realm, it is because you have got what is essentially a human consciousness already. It is because you have got this human, or potentially human, consciousness that you are drawn and attracted to the human realm. Let me give an analogy, supposing you go to a city like London where there are millions of people and all sorts of things going on. If you arrive as a visitor or a traveller or you just come to live there, you make your own range of contacts. Some people when they arrive in a new place they look for the nearest pub, within a week they know where all the pubs are. Somebody else knows where all the art galleries are, somebody else knows where all the jewelry shops are, and so on and so forth. You make your selection, you find out, you are drawn, you are attracted, you gravitate towards those things which interest you. So it is just the same with these different realms. There is no difficulty in finding your way into a human realm if you do start off with a human consciousness, you are drawn to the human realm, in fact in a sense you are already there and you make your connection.

Sanghadevi: I asked that question, It's more from if you haven't got a human consciousness.

S: Well if you haven't got a human consciousness you don't find the human realm. Just as if you go down to London and you haven't got an interest in the arts, you don't find your way to the National gallery.

Sanghadevi: More how does a stream of consciousness become a human stream of consciousness?

S: I'm not sure what the question was asking but I said That now that if the consciousness was already human, well then it connected itself with the human realm. By which I meant, that if the consciousness is already imbued with those qualities that we regard as distinctively human rather than animal or

Asura like or preta like. If it is imbued with those qualities then it becomes associated, in a way perhaps we can't understand, with a human form, a human body in its embryonic form.

Sanghadevi: Then perhaps the question should be, how does consciousness develop to the point of developing, having, those qualities?

S: That consciousness has come, as it were, in most cases from a previous human being. A human being has lived and has lived with a human consciousness so when that person dies the human physical body drops away and you have got the human consciousness which still feels, so to speak, the need to express itself in that particular human way. To work out things through the medium of a human body. So it searches, as it were, for another human body, with which it can merge and through which it can express, or continue to express its human desires, potential and so on and so forth.

Sanghadevi: I do appreciate all that but can consciousness shift from one realm, a realm that isn't a human realm to a human realm? Or is it that if it is in animal realms it is always going to be in animal realms, or god realms?

S: This raises the question, what do you mean by a conscious-ness. (laughter) I think it is quite easy to understand it when it is a question of one human consciousness passing to another human embodiment, that's not difficult to understand because it is on the same level. But what you seem to be asking is, how an animal consciousness, passes in, say, to a human body. But the question is, in fact, ambiguous and this is why I said, 'what does one mean by a consciousness. Because in the case of an animal you haven't got a consciousness in the same way that you have got a human consciousness. Because the human consciousness is much more individualised. It's as though, in the case of the animal there is a collective consciousness in which the animal participates, so when the animal dies, the physical body of the animal dies you haven't got an individual animal consciousness peculiar to that particular animal form looking round for some other embodiment. You have got the same collective, the same unindividualised consciousness. But supposing in the case of a particular animal for one reason or another, that animal consciousness has become more highly individualised than is usual or normal with an animal, perhaps through association with human beings. Supposing it has become individualised to the point where one can even speak of a low grade human consciousness. Then when the animal dies it is not just a question of that particular expression of the collective consciousness merging back into the collective animal consciousness of that species, you have got a low grade human consciousness, a somewhat individualised consciousness, which is in a position to connect, therefore, with a human body. So it seems to be a question of the degree of individualisation.

V: So how does it develop, that individualisation, only through contact with human beings?

S: It would seem that that would take place in the case of an animal like a dog or a horse through contact with individual

human beings. If one looks at it from a broader, evolutionary point of view traditional Buddhism has got nothing to say about that. So we have, as it were, to construct our own theories - one might say. Or try to find out or to see for ourselves. It does seem that at the same time one has coexisting in the world beings of different degree, or levels, of individualisation. You don't get animals collectively becoming human beings, as it were collectively. But you've got animals and you have got human beings and devas and so on. But in the animal realm a consciousness associated with an animal body becomes more highly individualised than is normal in the animal realm, therefore passes, so to speak, to the human realm. So in the case of the human realm an individualised consciousness associated with a human body becomes much more highly individualise, much more refined and pure than is the case with most human consciousness on death is reborn in some higher deva-like or angelic world. But it is not the case of the whole of the animal world being transformed into the human state or the whole of the human world being transformed into the deva state. It's like in a class, it is not that class two removes up into class one. Class two is always there, class one is always there but certain individuals, who reach the necessary standard pass from class two up into class one, but class two goes on functioning as class two, It's a little bit like that. It's not easy to explain the processes of rebirth and so on, especially if one is having to consider on the one hand what tradition says, what Buddhist teaching says, and on the other what we know and we have learned from the evolutionary science and so on.

Then there is another point here.

'You said yesterday that there are more human beings alive now than the sum total of previous human life. Why might this be so? Does it have any connection with the fourth Asamkhayya kappa?

S: I'm not sure about that, I am not sure what that last Wit means, but anyway I will deal with the previous bit first. Some people have been speculating about this recently, because, I forget the details but there is some difference of opinion between different authorities as to the length of time between rebirths. It does seem that nowadays people are being reborn more quickly, the turnover (laughter) is quicker. It's as though all the beings in, perhaps, this particular branch of the world system are more or less embodied. So that you haven't got, perhaps, many more to come into embodiment from other realms into this human world. So nowadays when people die they are reborn much more quickly, say, than they would have been some centuries earlier when that process had not really go;L underway. This is what some people nowadays are saying. But if one thinks of an individualised consciousness, well one individualised consciousness is separate from another, so you have got, as it were, different individuals and different consciousnesses. So in a way you have got a limited number of consciousnesses. So it could be that we have reached, as it were, saturation point. That some people think that we have got to think in terms of groups of individualised human consciousnesses. Perhaps, let's say for the sake of argument, five billion, and these are all together going through a certain cycle of development. And at present everybody who is involved in that process is actually embodied, or nearly everybody, perhaps. These are the sort of things that some people are

WOQ/A 85 7 - 6      110

thinking at present. So where does that leave us? It is an interesting point, because take an extreme case. Go back to a million years ago, how many human beings were there. Perhaps there were only a few thousand, say one million at the most but now there are 5 billion. So

what has happened in the interval? Have they actually developed from the collective animal consciousness or have they been born into the human state from some previous state of existence in which they were, so to speak, human. Quite a lot of people prefer the second hypothesis, it seems. Not that the possibility of passing from the animal state to the human state is denied, but that it does seem rather a lot to happen within such a comparatively short time. So therefore they have framed the hypothesis, or if you like they have seen the vision of, perhaps, five billion souls, for want of a better term, descending into this particular world at the dawn of history and reincarnating over and over again. Learning various lessons and developing and advancing on the path. It's not scientific (laughter) but then has science, also, any explanation? Do you see what I mean?

Parami: Do your~ ? )You keep saying 'certain people...'

S: This is something I have been reading, at present I am pondering it. But that's because we do have Buddhist texts, like the Agganna Sutta, which talk of beings, for want of a better term, descending from a higher plane of existence at the dawn of the kalpa. And perhaps we do have to think in some such terms. That we haven't only come up from the apes, this may be true of our bodily form, but perhaps the informing intelligence has some other source. I think it is probably going to take quite a while to get this all sorted out, because there are a lot of facts, both from biology and the history of evolution and from spiritual sources, traditional sources that we have to take into consideration, as well as certain broad philosophical principles. The keynote seems to be that, yes, human life is very precious, it is very valuable on account of its potential for development and we should bear that in mind as much as we possibly can and remind other people of it. Questions on Karma and karma-vipaka.

What is the relation between unmindfulness and karma? Is unmindfulness part of the drift of unconscious tendencies, which is part of volition? Therefore does unmindfulness have karmic consequences?

S: I think it depends on what you mean by karma. If you are Thinking of karma in terms of the volition of an individualised consciousness, then unmindfulness doesn't have karmic consequences in that sense, but it does have consequences. Because if you are unmindful you are confined to a lower level of consciousness and the fact that you are confined to that lower level of consciousness and therefore operate on that lower level of consciousness is, in a sense, karmic. Do you see what I mean? Let me give an example. Supposing you indulge in alcohol, you lose your mindfulness. So you are in a state where you are not really human, you lose, to some extent your individualised consciousness. You don't have mindfulness. So your actions don't have karma vipakas in the strict sense, but they do have consequences on their own level, which is a lower level. And the fact that you are on that lower level as a result of

Q/A 85 7 - 7 111

your unmindfulness is, in a sense, a sort of karma-vipaka. So in a broad sense, unmindfulness is, in the words of the question, 'part of the drift of unconscious tendencies', yes. The more mindful you are the less unconscious you are and the more of an individual you are. When mindfulness ceases or is in abeyance you just fall to a lower level. And in a sense that is the

karma, that is the karma-vipaka, that you have been reduced to that lower level.

How far do these unconscious tendencies go to be included in volition?

S: One could speak in terms of degrees of volition depending on the degree of individualised consciousness. There is a consequence, but it is a vipaka in the strict sense only if you performed that particular action with deliberate intent.

How can you define the line between what is volition and therefore has karmic consequences and what is not volitional and therefore has no karmic consequences?

S: I suppose the dividing line, or defining line, is mindfulness.

V: But in the wheel of life seminar you said That volition does include some conscious tendencies, it's not all

S: Yes, it depends how broadly you use the term. Because you have got your basic impulses and then they become more and more conscious. The more conscious they become the more you can really speak in terms of volition in the strict sense. But even in the course of our day to day life the level of volition is changing all the time in accordance with our level of mindfulness, our general level of operation. For instance, when we just reach out our hand and just take a sweet and put it in our mouths, well there is a very low level of volition. You are not really fully aware of what you are doing. But supposing you are writing a letter and it is an important letter and you are really concentrated, you are really trying to express something there is a much higher degree of mindfulness and therefore a much higher degree of volition and you are being more truly and individual. So if in that state you express something unskillful there is a much heavier vipaka than if you just, with a very vague awareness, and weak volition just stretch out your hand and take that sweet. Do you see what I mean?

In the light of this, could you explain why a fever due to experiences taking place in the dhyana is mano-niyama and not karma-niyama, given that dhyana are volitions?

S: It's just a side product. The fever is not a continuation of the volition, which is the dhyana, but a side product of it. Not having volitional value, so to speak, of its own. Now questions on the God realm.

In the text you speak of human beings experiencing pleasure and pain and the gods experiencing only pleasure. Can one refine oneself to such a point that one reaches the transcendent, i.e. a state as to the lokuttara, or does the usefulness of refinement cease at a certain point,

(1, e. the first anyana)

S: It's a question of refinement of what. One can think of the process of going through the dhyanas as a process of increasing refinement, but it is refinement of the mundane. And no amount of refinement of the mundane will bring you to the transcendental. I think this is the essential point here. You can refine and refine the mundane as much as you like, it is certainly refined, but it is still the mundane. So however refined the point of the mundane that you reach you still have to make that leap, for want of a better term, in the direction of the transcendental, which you do with the help of insight or with vipassana or prajna. Yes, refinement of the mundane is important as providing a basis for the the realisation of the transcendental. So samatha, the dhyanas are important as providing a basis for the development of insight. But however much, however well you develop the dhyanas, you still need insight, you still need wisdom if you are to have access to the transcendental. So refinement is not the last word, unless of course you are using the word refinement in a rather special sense, so that you refine and refine the mundane until you refine it out of existence. If you can actually do that, that is no doubt tantamount to the realisation of the transcendental.

V: Can you do that?

S: Perhaps it's just a matter of words. You have to decide whether you are using the term refinement literally or whether there is possible such a thing as refining something out of existence. Because, supposing, let me give you an example. I have heard that in one of the monasteries in Tibet in the old days they had an enormous vat in which they brewed tea every day for the hundreds of monks. And tea had been brewed in that vat every day for about six hundred years, since the time of Tsong-kha-pa. and they always kept a little bit at the bottom, every day, so every monk in every generation had an infinitesimal drop of the very tea that had been partaken of by Tsong-kha-pa. You can imagine, after six hundred years the proportion of tea of which Tsong-kha-pa had partaken became absolutely minute, it was a millionth, billionth part. But supposing you went on, indefinitely, adding more and more water and more and more and more tea, would you ever by that process be able to refine the original tea of which Tsong-kha-pa had partaken out of existence? Mathematically would you? no! However little, it would be a billionth, a billionth of a billionth, but something would still be there. So in that sense you can't refine something out of existence simply by the process of refinement. You have to make what I have called, that existential leap. In other words you have to throw away the whole thing, throw away the whole contents of the vat and start all over again. So you can't really, I think. Perhaps it is safer to say, or clearer to say, you can't really refine something out of existence.

V: How does that connect with your recent Thinking about the arupa dhyanas being possibly transcendental?

S: No, that's a quite different. Not that the arupa dhyanas are transcendental, I have merely been speculating whether in very early Buddhism the arupa dhyanas were the name given to the transcendental itself. Not that the arupa dhyanas are,

WOQ/A 85 7 - 9 113

as arupa dhyanas, transcendental. It is, in a way, a question of terminology in this case. There is something that we call, now, the transcendental, and the arupa dhyana~nas are nowadays usually regarded as belonging to the mundane, but I was led to think that perhaps in

the early days of Buddhism that the transcendental was covered by the arupa dhyanas.

V: But they arise in dependence on the fourth dhyana, don't they.

S: Yes. That is the experience of them arises in dependence on the fourth dhyana.

V: But if they are transcendental?

S: They can still arise. Because in the positive nidana Thain, in dependence upon samadhi arises knowledge and vision of things as they really are, which is transcendental.

V: Yes but what I am trying to get at is that I thought you can only develop insight in the first dhyana.

S: Ahh, I see what you mean.

V: So by saying that you can experience the Untranscendental from the fourth dhyana you are almost saying that if you keep going up and up you will reach the transcendental.

S: No, it isn't really quite like that. Because, after all, The transcendental isn't really in any direction. But the basic thing is that the transcendental is realised through insight, so the question is 'insight into what?' In conceptual terms it is insight into transitoriness, painfulness and insubstantiality. So those constitute a sort of conceptual framework, and that conceptual framework can be apprehended only by means of mental activity, concentrated mental activity. And such concentrated mental activity is not possible in the higher dhyanas. So the traditional procedure therefore is, that you have the experience of the higher dhyanas and you concentrate your mind with their help, but then you also have, as it were, to set up mental activity so that you can comprehend the nature of that particular conceptual formulation and have an intuitive grasp through that of insight. So in a manner of speaking you come down from the higher dhyanas, but again you mustn't take that too literally. Because you as it were come down from them and you start that mental activity which will enable you to comprehend the conceptual formulations, deeply influenced, even saturated, by the dhyana experience. So it is not that you have left them entirely behind and you are exactly back where you started from, not in that sense at all. But yes, it is in dependence upon your experience of the first dhyanas, that is to say your experience of intense mental concentration, combined with mental activity that insight arises, with the help of the traditional, conceptual formulations. As it were, you are reflecting impermanence, everything is impermanent. Everything changes, there is nothing that one can really grasp. Through concentration, with the help of the dhyanas you have concentrated all your energies on the realisation of that particular truth, you have all your

WOQ/A 85 7 - 10 114

energies to bear on that. Because you have brought all your energies to bear on that you can really see the truth of it, in the way that you can't see with your scattered and unconcentrated mind. People have no doubt experienced that even though on a much lower level. Maybe you read that particular chapter of the Three Jewels, if you read it with a concentrated mind you have a very clear understanding of it. But if, for any reason, your mind is unconcentrated, scattered, you don't get that same deep, clear understanding of what the text is saying. It is

like that with anything of a worthwhile nature that you read. It is the same with poetry in a different kind of way, if you read it scattered, not settled, not calm and concentrated, you don't really take it in, you don't get the emotional charge that the poem is capable of giving you. But if you read it with preparation, in the calm, concentrated state, you experience the shock, as it were, of the poem. It communicates an experience to you. I am not quite sure where all that came in, but that's more or less what it is.

(end side one)

'In what way does our relating to images and symbols of devas, gods and angels help us in our spiritual lives?

S: In some ways the experience of devas angels and so on is a matter of projection. They enable us, or they help us to experience more tangibly something which is, as yet, deeply hidden within ourselves. At first we experience them only in pictured form, probably everybody has experienced this. You see a picture, maybe it is actually a picture of an angel, a painting of an angel, maybe a Renaissance painting, and it affects you, it moves you very deeply. It is as though something in your unconscious has stirred in response to that particular image, that particular figure. You can get it with statues of Bodhisattvas and other such forms, other such figures too. Something in you 'latches on', as it were, and something in you is enabled to come up a little more into the light of consciousness and is integrated just a little bit more into your overall conscious attitude. That seems to be what happens. Do people actually find this? Some images leave you cold, some symbols leave you cold but others move you and stir you quite deeply for no apparent reason, there is a resonance within you in response to them. Different symbols affect different people. Within the FWBO it seems that the image or symbol of the angel is experienced quite strongly by quite a lot of people and it is nothing to do with Christianity, it's just that beautiful winged figure. Maybe with a lily in his hand, maybe with a sword, whatever it may be. Some people are deeply moved by the images of Chinese or Japanese or Tibetan Buddhist art. So images and symbols affect us just because they correspond to something in ourselves. They enable us to objectify it to some extent. There is a correspondence between what we see outside and what we haven't quite begun to experience within ourselves.

'Please define what gods and goddesses are. Is there a distinction between them and the devas?'

S: I would say that broadly speaking they are all the same, very broadly speaking, psychologically speaking. I am not

WOQ/A 85 7 - 11 115

saying theologically or in terms of comparing one religion with another. But psychologically gods, goddesses, devas, devis, angels, these all are much the same sort of spiritual phenomena.

'Could you define different levels of god realms? And does one move from lower god realms to higher god realms before going into the transcendental, or does one inevitably come back down to a lower plane before attaining the transcendental?'

S: In the Pali texts, especially, you do get descriptions of different god realms. The distinguishing feature seems to be that the higher realms are more and more distinguished by light. The higher you go the more brilliant the light and perhaps this is significant. As for inevitable coming back down to a lower plane before attaining the transcendental, not necessarily because there is the phenomenon of what is called the non-returner. The non-returner is said to be reborn in the pure abodes, the Suddhavasa which are at the peak of the rupa-loka, and attains liberation from there. That Suddhavasa can be regarded, in some ways, as corresponding to Sukhavati or any other pure realm.

'We read from the scriptures that Maitraya is in the Tushita heaven and presumably teaching the Dharma. Are there also other Bodhisattvas in other god realms, if so are the god realms not so difficult to progress in?'

S: This has all sorts of interesting tie ups because Sukhavati or the pure abode, they are worlds of non-regression. Once you get there, once you are reborn there your progress is assured, in a way you have gone beyond even stream entry, because a stream entrant can be reborn in this world even though his progress is assured. But a non-returner is a stream entrant on an even higher level, so to speak. He, she or it is definitely progressing in the direction of full enlightenment, and is not coming back to a lower world. I suppose it is a matter of nomenclature, these other Bodhisattvas and other god realms, you could speak in terms of one god realm of this sort for the whole universe or you could speak of different god realms, or different aspects of that one god realm corresponding to different universes within universes. I think it is a matter of nomenclature. One does speak in terms, traditionally, of Amitabha presiding over Sukhavati, Akshobya presiding over another pure realm - Abhirati and so on, but one mustn't take all these differences of nomenclature too literally.

'If Amitabha's pure land is neither mundane nor transcendental where does it fit into this?'

S: Well when one says neither mundane nor transcendental, obviously one is thinking in terms of going beyond all duality and it is that going beyond all duality in which consists the true transcendental. You might say that the transcendental which is distinguished from the mundane is not the real transcendental, though to begin with you cannot but distinguish the transcendental from the mundane. It corresponds to the conditioned, the unconditioned, and neither the conditioned or the unconditioned, and so on. Many of these questions seem to boil down to a matter of

WOQ/A 85 7 - 12 116

understanding the reason why the words are used and not getting caught up in the words themselves. Let's go on to questions on other realms, the six realms and Buddha seeds. First of all about the Asuras, someone is curious about the Asuras.

'Are the Asuras inferior or superior to the humans in that they symbolise a negative state but are also gods?'

S: The Asuras seem to have been tacked on afterwards. In many early texts where they speak of the human realm, the animal realm, the preta realm, hell realm, god realm, they don't

mention the Asuras, the Asuras seem to have been included later. They are sometimes reckoned as being above the human realm and sometimes they are reckoned as being below the human realm and it was a long time before I discovered the reason for this - but there is a reason, it is not just accidental. You can think of this hierarchy in two forms, that is to say the hierarchy of these five or six realms of beings. You can think of it either as a hierarchy of happiness or you can think of it as a hierarchy of power. Now the Asuras are more powerful than human beings, so in that sense they come above human beings in the hierarchy, but they are less happy and in that sense they come below.

'How do animals evolve or develop self consciousness if they never have contact with humans or Bodhisattvas?'

S: I think that the answer to that is that they don't. But obviously there are some animals that have contact with some human beings, perhaps even, we don't know, those who have contact with Bodhisattvas, but certainly some have contact with human beings and for them there is a possibility of further development. But one might even put the question in another form, 'how do human beings develop self consciousness?'. How do you develop self consciousness? Assuming your self consciousness is very rudimentary and you are barely aware that you have got self consciousness, paradoxically, but how do you develop it, how does it develop?

Sanghadevi: Through your contact with other people.

S: Contact with other people, yes. So it would seem to be the same in the case of animals. You can even see animals taking on certain human characteristics, can't you, after prolonged association with human beings. Not always positive ones, I've mentioned before, I have seen in my time some very neurotic dogs, and it is the fault of their owners. You can see that quite clearly. One might even say that it is the duty of everybody to have some contact with some form of life, human or otherwise less developed, because that is the way the evolution proceeds. Just as you depend on those more developed than you, those less developed than you depend upon you. So out of gratitude for the contact you have with those more developed than you you should be happy to have contact with those less developed than you, not regard it as just a chore. It is not easy, especially if they are quite a bit less developed than you, say if they are children - in some cases, or if they are very dull human beings or very different or have lots of problems. But still one has to exercise patience

WOQ/A 85 7 - 13 117

and do what one can.

'If the human realm is the realm from which one gains enlightenment, so to speak, how does this relate to the Chinese teaching of Buddha seeds in the six realms? What exactly are these Buddha seeds and do they have any connection with the seeds which accumulate in the Alaya-Vijnana of the Yogacara?'

S: Well to answer the last part of the question first, yes, all seeds, all potentialities are contained, so to speak, in the Alaya-Vijnana, so these too. But then what is the purpose of this teaching, this teaching of the seeds? I think this is what we have to ask ourselves. It is a

sort of pictorial teaching, it's an illustration and I think what it simply means to depict or means to teach is that human beings have got more potentialities than other forms of life. -- Therefore if you are a human being you are jolly lucky and you should take full advantage of the fact that you are a human being. I think that is really what it is all about. It is not really literally saying that there are literally so many yellow seeds and so many red seeds and so many black seeds in an animal and so many in a human being. It is not, as it were, scientific, in that way. The drift of that teaching is just to remind you that a human being has got a greater potential for spiritual development than any other form of life, therefore you should develop whatever potentialities that you do have. Maybe it is not quite as simple as that because you can also regard the realms of existence as being contained within human existence itself. If you do that then of course the teaching is meant to encourage you, in as much as, even if you are in a hellish state of mind or a preta like state of mind there is some potential there. Your potentiality for higher development is not altogether obscured, even so, you can still develop, you can still grow. And strange to say, as you know the teaching, that people in a hell realm, taking the hell realm as an aspect of the human realm for the moment, are in perhaps a more favourable state for higher development than those in the heavenly or preta realm, even. But the whole teaching, I think, is meant to be encouraging. Meant to remind you that there is always, in the case of human beings, some potentiality for enlightenment. If you are a human being, well the potentiality is greater. But if you are a hellish human being, you are still a human being, there is still some potentiality left. Even if you are a neurotic human being there is still a potentiality there. If you are an aggressive human being there is still some potentiality left, greater or less, but you still can make some progress, even very great progress. In as much as you are a human being, and Buddha seeds are there, however much you have obscured them. Then again it is not a quasi scientific teaching it is a reminder of your potential.

'Quote:- Reborn either on an even lower sub-plane of the same state or among the tormented spirits" Could you say a bit about the Bodhisattva who traditionally appears in the hell realm, i.e. Kshitigarbha who belongs to the Akshobya family? And also about the figure of Avalokitesvara who belongs to the Amitabha family who appears in each of the six realms of the Wheel of Life? In particular what help would a bodhisattva give a tormented spirit?'

W0Q/A 85 7 - 14 118

S: I am not quite sure what I am being asked to say. Whether to enlarge on the figure of Kshitigarbha or Avalokitesvara in this respect. But yes, Kshitigarbha is a very popular figure of the Buddhist pantheon, so to speak. Especially in the far east. He seems for some reason or another, not to have been popular in India or in Tibet but to have been very popular in China and Japan, and he is depicted in various ways. Sometimes he is depicted like a Bodhisattva, sometimes he is depicted like a monk. A Sarvastivadin monk with a shaven head and a ringed staff and, of course, the usual robes. As for Avalokitesvara, of course, yes, he appears in a Buddha form in each of the six realms. This illustrated much the same general point as the Buddha seeds, that in every realm of existence, in every state of human consciousness, there is the potentiality for higher development, even the potentiality for Buddhahood, and we must never forget that. There are always even opportunities, objective opportunities for spiritual development, and you can always do something. As for the particular help that a Bodhisattva gives a tormented spirit, well, perhaps one can look at one's own experience. Even though one isn't a Bodhisattva, as a human being, trying to be helpful, you have sometimes met tormented spirits, haven't you. People in very great

suffering, what do you do, how do you go about helping them? To begin with you empathise with them, you feel with them and feel for them. You alleviate their condition in any practical way that you can. You get into communication with them if you possibly can. You try to see the situation in which they are and out of your empathy and your seeing of the sort of state that they are in and perhaps why they are in it you try to speak such words as are helpful, or do such things as may be helpful. And a Bodhisattva does simply that, at a much higher level and of course very much more effectively and efficiently. Perhaps one can say no more than that. After all there are all sorts of tormented spirits, different kinds of tormented spirits need help in different ways just as people suffering from different problems need help in different ways. There is no one way of going about it, whether for Bodhisattvas or human beings who are not Bodhisattvas. We have to fall back on our general experience and our general qualities, a general sense of the situation, and as we say, play it by ear. For instance someone might come to you just bereaved in some terrible way, well there is no formula for dealing with a situation like that. If you have got it in you to respond in the appropriate way you will, otherwise you will just experience your own helplessness and inadequacy in that situation. Some people are able to rise to the occasion better than others. Some instinctively know what to do, what to say, others are just at a loss when confronted by a situation like that. It just depends on your general level of spiritual maturity, your general level of experience. But there is no formula that you ought to apply in that sort of situation, you have to follow your instincts, so to speak, your higher, spiritual instinct.

'People who are doing a lot of meditation sometimes experience states of madness akin to paranoia and fear. When one is in this state what is the best counter-active measure to take?

S: First of all I am not so sure that people who are doing a lot of meditation sometimes experience states of madness etc.

WOQ/A 85 7 - 15 119

I think perhaps that question isn't quite rightly phrased, because if you are doing a lot of meditation you are in a dhyana state, and that is not a state of madness. I think what the questioner means is, when you are trying to meditate, trying to concentrate, trying to get into that state - do you see what I mean? And yes, you may, incidentally experience states of, I am not sure about madness but certainly states of paranoia and fear. So, 'when one is in that state what is the best counter-active measure to take?' I'll leave aside the states of madness because those are quite extreme and madness is a very general term and not very precise, but paranoia and fear, they are more precise terms. So, what one is to do? Sometimes people experience this on retreat. If you possibly can you should sweat it out, because it is a quite important experience and a lot of people do have this sort of experience. Sometimes, of course, it is so terrible and so overwhelming that you can't. I had someone ring me up a couple of months ago, he was on solitary retreat but he had, day after day, night after night, nothing but paranoia and fear. It was so extreme that I advised him, which I hardly ever advise anyone to do, to break off his solitary retreat and get back into contact with his spiritual friends. I think if you possibly can, I won't say handle it because sometimes it is beyond handling, but if you can possibly endure it and live through it, somehow, do so. But if you really can't, if you feel that you might even go mad, and that was how that particular person felt, the best thing you can do is to get back into contact with your spiritual friends.

When I say contact I don't necessarily mean deep spiritual contact, you won't be capable of that, probably, for a while, after having that sort of experience, but just into contact. Even, if you like, physical contact, just holding them or letting them hold you, or just talking to them. Maybe telling them about your experience, maybe not, but just getting back into contact with them. Not in a way, if you can help it, if you can avoid it, of just seeking comfort and warmth but just spiritual communication to the extent that you are capable. But this can be a very terrible experience and quite a few of our friends have gone through. When it is a full blown experience of that sort there is just nothing you can do about it. You can't even struggle with it, it is quite overwhelming, it just takes you over and you have, as it were, just to live through it, there is nothing else you can do except in very, very extreme cases, just get back into contact with your spiri- tual friends.

Vajrasuri: Is it an integrating process, sweating it out?

S: I think in the long run. If the person has done some amount of meditation and has reached some spiritual maturity, it certainly can be part of the process of integration. But if one contacts that experience prematurely well I think that can be madness then. But if you have done meditation and so on, then you have got some sort of basis on which you can encounter the shock, so to speak, and you can live through it. But I think you could say, that people who, as it were, go mad, are people who have had that sort of experience without any spiri- tual preparation and it has had a disintegrating effect on them. They have not been able to integrate it, in a way you can't integrate it because you are quite changed by this experience, the old self is modified to an extreme degree. You just don't

W0Q/A 85 7 - 16 120

see things in the same way afterwards, perhaps. So you certainly don't integrate it in the ordinary sort of way. It's much too much a devastating experience. But most people, I think, go through it to some degree. Some go through it much more than others for one reason or another. I won't say that it is inevitable, but it seems very, very common. But I think that the more preparation than you have done in the way of meditation and developing emotional positivity, the more you can cushion the shock, the impact of that experience. The more 'easily', if that is the right expression, you can live through it. Quite a few people in the movement have had this sort of experience in some degree. It's very difficult, even, to describe it. It's like, almost contacting a black hole.

Vajrasuri: What is it reaching the limits of one's integration

U- )what's happening?

S: I suppose one could say that you come to a point where you realise, you see that what you have always thought of as you, yourself, is just not there. (V: Aah) It modifies your sense of your own ego identity. That's why it is a quite devastating thing.

'Does the experience of these states of madness necessarily indicate that something is wrong with the way that we are practicing?

S: Sometimes it does. I think not in the FWBO but there are some schools of meditation where you are precipitated into an experience of this sort before~you are really ready for it,

that can result in an actual breakdown. Some of the more extreme forms of so-called vipassana meditation, it catapults people into experiences for which they are not prepared.

But if you are doing your mindfulness, metta bhavana and visualisation practice, it is very unlikely that you will be catapulted into anything for which you are not really ready. But nonetheless you may still have, depending on your individual psychological history and spiritual history, a more or less extreme experience of, at least fear. Maybe not actual paranoia but at least a considerable measure of fear that you may find very difficult to handle, or may not be able to handle at all, you just have to 'submit' to, as it were, there's just nothing you can do about it. If you survive, well (laughter) well you have survived, that's the main thing, you have succeeded. The surviving is an achievement.

V: Do you think it is an inevitable process?

S: I don't like to say that anything is inevitable, but Vots of people do seem to go through this. I think everybody at least to some degree. But with some people it is no more than a rather unpleasant half hour, whereas with others it may be a totally devastating day and night. Miscellaneous questions: 'For a stream of consciousness to gain enlightenment how important is it that it has physical form, given that the human realm is the most auspicious realm?'

S: Well in a sense I have already answered this, because I said that from the pure abodes, as they are called, or

WOQ/A 85 7 - 17 121

from the pure land, one can gain enlightenment directly. One doesn't have a human form then, one has a deva form. But of course one has risen to that state from the human state. So broadly speaking the human state is the basis for any higher development.

'This is connected with "relinking of the stream of consciousness". You have talked elsewhere about swooning in the womb at conception making us forget our previous life. Presumably all this sinks into the subconscious. Do you think that with systematic meditation one inevitably becomes aware of one's previous life? If not how can one be fully aware and not remember them?'

S: It doesn't seem to be inevitable that one becomes aware of one's previous life. Although the questioner goes on to say, 'if not how can one be fully aware and not remember them?' One might say, if fully aware means fully aware you have to be aware of everything. But do you need to be aware of every- thing, and where do you stop? Because according to Buddhism you have numberless previous existences. Do you need to be aware of them all, isn't it rather a waste of time? Because what you really need to be aware of is your self here and now and reality, above all of reality. So it isn't necessary, from the spiritual point of view, that you should be aware of previous existences, but it does certainly happen in the case of some people that they do spon- taneously become aware of previous existences, or fragments of previous existences. It also does seem that you can develop that particular faculty. But it doesn't have a very direct bearing on the attainment of the transcendental. Though it may help you, in as much as it enables you to see very concretely the connection between cause and effect, over a whole series of lives. But even then, just to see how it works out in the course of two or three lives would be enough. You, presumably, wouldn't

need to go back over hundreds and thousands of lives, that would be rather unnecessary. So full awareness, in that sort of panoramic sense isn't necessary to spiritual development or enlightenment. Nor does one inevitably become aware with systematic meditation, of one's previous life or lives.

'In terms of the image you spoke of yesterday of coagulations within a stream being the individual currents of psychophysical energy, would the "ever-accelerating process of deterioration, decline and downfall of sentient existence within the lower planes" lead to a breaking up of these coagulations to the point where they no longer exist in any cohesive form?'

S: I think this is actually possible. In the case of a consciousness that was individualised to a very limited extent, I think if that consciousness, if that person, neglected their opportunities for further development and deteriorated during their human lifetime, their so-called human life time, they might reach a point where they had virtually undone that coagulation, undone that work of individualisation so that on death they simply merged back into a sub-human, collective consciousness. I think that is possible. So I think that is an additional argument for, again, making the best use of one's opportunities. You do lose a faculty that you don't continue to use, that's true, I think, even on the physical

W0Q/A 85 7 - 18 122

plane, isn't it. Muscles that you don't use become stiff and go out of action, as it were.

'Is it justifiable to prolong life on life support systems when there is no obvious expression of consciousness? How would this affect any future rebirth of this stream of consciousness?'

S: Perhaps we don't really know what goes on. The questioner says, 'when there is no obvious expression of consciousness,' because it would seem that you can yourself, subjectively be conscious when people who are observing you think that you are unconscious or even dead. So we don't really know, very often, what the position is. So perhaps it is best to give the person who is apparently unconscious the benefit of the doubt for a reasonable period and treat them as though they are conscious and therefore alive, and continue with the life support systems. Otherwise you will, if they are conscious in effect be killing them, and they will undergo some suffering, presumably, on account of that, which may affect their next rebirth. Where we just don't know we have to proceed with extreme caution. I think this is one of the faults of medical people nowadays, that they just rush in and do things where they don't really know what they are doing always. So yes, I think certainly, think a dozen times before taking someone off a life support system, even if they do appear to be unconscious, because you don't really know what is going on. 'Quote:- "one or two quasi-exceptional cases apart, it is only when supported by a human body that the stream of consciousness can evolve to the point at which it is able to function as a basis for the manifestation of the absolute consciousness that constitutes enlightenment." Could you give examples of these quasi-exceptional cases?'

S: Well I have, in fact, already mentioned them. They are The case of the Anagamis, that is to say the non-returners, who, according to tradition, are reborn in the five Sudhavasas, the five pure abodes, situated, so to speak, at the peak of the arupa-loka. They have, as it

were, god forms. They are rather mysterious beings, god forms but consciousnesses of anagamis, which means predominantly transcendental consciousnesses.

'Quote:- Thus there is not only a general correspondance in the Hermetic sense, between the realm of conditioned and the realm of unconditioned existence". Could you say a bit more about what this Hermetic sense is?'

S: I am referring to the so called 'emerald tablet', of Hermes to his( ). Anyone heard of that? You've heard of thrice great Hermes, as he is called. There is a collection of writings in Greek belonging to the, perhaps, second or third century which is apparently based on a sort of Greek interpretation, almost Neo-platonic interpretation of Ancient Egyptian wisdom. And these writings are attributed to the Egyptian Thoth(?) or as the Greeks called him Hermes, to ( ) The god Hermes corresponded to the Egyptian Thoth . Thoth was a sort of scribe of the gods, a sort of Egyptian Manjusri, we might say, except he had the

WOQ/A 85 7 - 19 123

head of an Ibis, an Ibis being a large bird. He is often represented in Egyptian tomb paintings and so on. So he is called thrice great because he was regarded as king, as priest, and I think it was teacher, I am not quite sure whether the third one was teacher but anyway he was regarded as great in these capacities. He was always the first physician, it was he who helped embalm the body of Osiris and so on and so forth. Among these teachings of his there is this so called emerald tablet on which is inscribed, 'as above, so below'. In other words there is a correspondence between spiritual things and material things and this is a very basic mode of apprehension, it is a sort of alternative to logical thought, in a way. We have this in Buddhism in the Vajrayana, where 'above', so to speak, we have the five Buddhas. And what do you have below, corresponding to those? (V's Skandhas) You have the five skandhas, or you have the five elements, or five colours, or whatever. So you have a system of correspondances and according to this Hermetic principle everything that is above has a corresponding principle below. And everything that is below has its corresponding principle above. The one, as it were, reflects the other, or there is a sort of mysterious connection between them. So therefore I say, 'there is not only a general correspondance in the Hermetic sense, between the realm of the conditioned and the realm of the unconditioned. I think I also go on to say also a specific correspondance. Just as if you divide above into five Buddhas, the below is automatically divided into five skandhas. But not only that, but one particular Buddha corresponds to one particular skandha, and so on and so forth. In that way you get a detailed set of specific correspondances. Which is useful for purposes of meditation and reflection and so on. Some people's mind work in this sort of way, I must say my own mind works quite a bit in this sort of way. I feel quite at home with sets of correspondances. Some people react strongly, they just consider it all quite absurd and nonsensical and unscientific and so on and so forth. But the sets of correspondances provide a sort of grid, so to speak, on which you can operate. So in the case of the Vajrayana you have got above - the five Buddhas, the five awarenesses, the five Dakinis. What else have you got above?

Vajrasuri: Colours (S: yes)

V: Wisdoms (S: wisdoms or awarenesses, yes)

V: The five animals.

S: The animals too, do they really belong above, I suppose. In a sense they do because they are associated with the Buddhas of their mounts. Then below you have got the five senses, the five skandhas.

V: The five poisons.

S: Yes. It is a sort of way of making sense of existence. The~posing a sort of pattern on the chaos of existence.

(end of tape 7)

WOQ/A 85 8 - 1 124

Sanghadevi: experiences. A bit like when you were talking yesterday about a philosophy of non-violence - it wasn't that somebody developed this philosophy, it is more an experience of empathy with nature. It's grown out of people's experience.

S: I think perhaps one could say that, though maybe. An experience of a rather different sort, because when you are talking about the five Buddhas you are speaking about transcendental experience. But maybe people perceive correspondences in a rather limited way, but gradually saw a deeper and deeper significance in that and extended it to include even the transcendental and the mundane as such, the conditioned and the unconditioned. Perhaps you can see, to begin with, a correspondance between heaven and earth in a quite basic, simple way. The ancient Indians seem to have seen a correspondance between the fire in the sky, that is to say the sun, and the fire on earth, that is to say the kindled fire. I think usually one starts with very simple beginnings and you expand and you deepen at the same time. So I think, therefore, as I think I have said before, there are two ways of looking at spiritual development. One advancing from stage to stage and progressing, and the other deepening your experience of what is already there. You could call, if you wanted to introduce those terms, one the more masculine and the other the more feminine. It's as though in the spiritual life you need to have both of them. You mustn't think one sidedly of the spiritual life as a progression from stage to stage, otherwise you become too object or aim oriented. You need to balance that with just thinking in terms of deepening your present experience or unfolding from a deeper and deeper centre within you. But if you think only in those sort of terms, well then you may become a bit inert. You need also to think in terms of progression. So both at the same time, or at least alternating between the two modes, as it were, at different times, different periods of your life. Again it is a question of 'as above, so below'. Because above there is the Bodhicitta, the absolute and the relative Bodhicitta, where the absolute Bodhicitta is enlightenment itself but the relative Bodhicitta is the Bodhicitta ever lastingly trying to attain that which is, in fact, already attained. So you have got the two together. The two together is the ultimate realisation. So in your spiritual life you are trying all the time to achieve that which, in fact, you already have. But you have to do both, realise that you already have it but at the same time going all out to achieve it. If you have one by itself it is unbalanced and you are out of balance. But do you actually find this in the course of your own lives, that sometimes you just want to stay where you are and just go deeper, unfold from a deeper centre? But other times you feel like going forward or going upward, going up

the mountain side, as it were. These are two different phases of spiritual life, but they do belong together, really. One can't really, in the long run, have the one without the other.

Parami: Would ( ) seeing connections with one or other of these particularly? The staying put one, penetrating something more deeply by seeing its connections above?

S: Perhaps, yes. One is more spacial, the other is more Tynamic. If you think in terms of the mandala, putting

WOQ/A 85 8 - 2 125

everything in to its proper place in the Mandala in relation to what is at the centre of the Mandala. Well this is, as it were, more spacial, therefore more static, therefore more related to that first mode that I spoke of. Whereas the other is more dynamic, you are moving forward, you are leaving one thing behind and advancing to another, you are in movement, you are growing, you are developing. But, although that is a very useful way of looking at things, we musn't forget it is not the only way of looking at things. In fact it shouldn't be the only way of looking at things, ( ) the only way of looking at spiritual life. One the one hand there is the achievement of a totally new level of being and on the other there is a deeper realisa- tion of what you actually already are, and in a sense always are.

Vajrasuri: It's very difficult to get ( ? ) about that.

S: Maybe you have to engage separate lobes of the brain. (laughter) It is difficult to get into a single focus ideas which are, in a sense, contradictory. There is no really logical way of doing that.

Parami: It's almost as if you have to expand your frame of reference to

S: Yes. You have to be running like mad but at the same Thme have the experience of standing absolutely still.

Parami: Dakini, it makes me think of a Dakini in

S: Not quite even like that, that is more dynamic, one could say. It's impossible to combine the two ways of looking at things in a single visual image. You can't even combine them in a single thought, you've got separate thoughts, two different thoughts that you can sort of put side by side, but you can't really synthesise them, but that in your higher faculty is required. The Imagination with a capital 'I' or Insight with a capital 'I'. But I think you can also, usefully, consult your dream experience here. I don't know whether anyone has ever had this experience but I have had this experience a number of times. In fact, in a way I have slightly cultivated it. You know you have a dream and when you wake up you just have a flash, you remember the dream. Let me give you an example, you wake up and you realise that you have been dreaming, say about traveling in India, and it is a quite full detailed dream that you remember. At the same time, the very same ins- tant that you remember that what you have actually been drea- ming is something quite different, you have been dreaming that you have been painting a picture, let's say, a picture of a flower. But at that same instant you realise that it would be equally true to say that you had been dreaming of travelling in India

and that you have been painting a picture of a flower. To your waking consciousness they seem two alternatives, but the dream experience was both, in a mysterious way that the waking consciousness is not able to apprehend. And that is really quite odd, isn't it? That the dream should be both, whereas your waking consciousness says that it has got to be either.

So it is rather like that, that is an analogy. You have got to be racing forward all the time, moving from stage to

WOQ/A 85 8 - 3      126

stage, climbing up that mountainside. At the same time you have got to be absolutely still and just realising more and more deeply where you actually are now. Dreams are quite interesting in this way because they give us access to a completely different mode of consciousness, and we mustn't judge things entirely by the standards of waking consciousness. People who have had drug experiences know that their consciousness becomes altered in much the same sort of way. That's one of the interesting things about these psychedelic drugs and psychedelic experiences. They really do broaden your conception of consciousness, or conception of existence, or conception of life. We are just thinking in such narrow and limited terms. Anyway, since I was talking about dreams perhaps we had better end on that note, and go straight off and have some; after the puja of course. Have you ever noticed, by the way, that if you have a puja just before you go to sleep that also affects your dream life.

v:      Keeps me awake!

S:      Keeps you awake? (V: Sometimes) And meditation, does That keep you awake?

V:      No that      (drowned by laughter)

S:      That's as it should be, because meditation inhibits The thought processes, so you are not thinking and you are not worrying. So if you are naturally tired, you should, after meditation have a good nights sleep.

Parami:      During meditation! (laughter)

S:      At least you are honest, I will say that for you.

V:      But you'd need to go straight to bed after apuja.

S:      I think that is important, I think it is a mistake if people, after a puja, just have a little chat over a cup of coffee and then go to sleep. I don't know about in women's communities but in men's communities they do this and I think it is a mistake. I think after puja it is best just to go quietly straight to bed and have a good nights sleep, with hopefully pleasant dreams. But sometimes people seem reluctant to go to bed, even though they are tired, they have another cup of coffee, another cup of coffee, another little chat, (laughter) then they don't sleep properly and can't get up in the morning. I don't know whether people do take their dream life at all seriously but perhaps they should. Without being precious about it or silly about it, but do take into consideration this other aspect of one's consciousness.

Sridevi:      It is very interesting keeping a dream diary, and looking back.

S: I have never kept a dream diary but I have often just written down significant dreams. And quite often dreams do tell you something. Years and years ago I used to have..., well I have had in the course of my life various recurrent dreams, which really did seem to be telling me something.

WOQ/A 85 8 - 4 127

I remember years and years ago at certain times in my life I would get a recurrent dream of a woman scolding me. (laughter) So at first I was rather puzzled by this, why should this be because I wasn't on bad terms with any particular woman or anything like that. But I'd get this dream of a woman scolding me, sometimes being quite angry, but I came to the conclusion in the end, I worked out what it was. It was when I was out of touch with my imagination. When I was intellectually too active and maybe wasn't reading any poetry or wasn't deeply into visualisation or anything like that, and the woman was my imagination and she was protesting that she wasn't getting enough attention. So I found that if I had this experience and I did devote a bit more attention to imaginative things, like poetry, it stopped. But if I got too one sided, or too intellectual I would get these sorts of dreams again. Sometimes she would be phoning me (laughter) She wasn't anybody I knew, she was just a woman, neither particularly old or particularly young. But I worked it out and it was a sort of muse, do you see what I mean. A figure of that..., well it was not so much a figure, it was usually just a face and a voice or sometimes just a voice on the telephone.

Sridevi: Was she old or young?

S: I said, neither old nor young. But the telephone, it's not only communication, it's the last vestige of communication because you hear the voice but you don't see the person. So it is as though when you got very out of touch with that aspect of yourself, with your own imagination, you have that sort of dream. It is just a voice, almost an impersonal voice, on the telephone, scolding you. I never remember that this voice or this woman was scolding me for any particular thing, she was always just scolding, or sometimes she was very, very angry. But it was this suppressed, or submerged, or even repressed aspect of myself protesting against that. So I learned to take this as a sort of danger signal and I closed my Abhidharma and opened my Shelley. That always did the trick. So one's unconscious, through dreams, does give one, I'm sure, messages of that sort, which one is wise to pay some attention to.

I thought it interesting that imagination, as I took it to be, appeared always in feminine form. I am sure there is some significance here, one could even look at it in terms of anima. But it was definitely the muse, as it were, it was that more creative aspect, especially associated with the arts. I haven't had any phone call from her for quite a long time now, quite a few years, I think it is because I have balanced my life and my interests more.

Sridevi: I read some Tibetan's advice to chant your mantra before you go to sleep. Would you advise that?

S: Well the chanting or repeating of mantra before you go to sleep is one of the ways of prolonging awareness, that is the waking state of awareness into sleep. So it is probably for that reason. One can have very spiritually significant dreams if you meditate or repeat mantras or do pujas just before you go to sleep. Sometimes you can have experiences that you don't have in the waking state, very significant experiences which you don't have in the

waking state because of certain distractions and lack of concentration and so on. So I think dream experiences can be very valuable

WOQ/A 85 8 - 5      128

and you can learn a lot from them.

(end of session)

S:      Alright, questions general, skandhas.

'Was the teaching of the breakdown of the five skandhas originated by the Buddha, or does it have its roots in Hindu or perhaps Zoroastrian roots?'

S:      I think Zoroastrian roots is a bit of a shot in the dark. (laughter)      What we can say is that in pre-Buddhist tradition there was certainly a distinction between narma and rupa. That was the primary subdivision, narma and rupa are mentioned in Vedic literature. But it does seem that it was the Buddha himself who sub-divided narma, which literally means name, into four. That is to say into vedana, samjna, samskara and vijnana, and no doubt you have been studying these terms this morning. You don't find this kind of subdivision, as far as is known, prior to the Buddha, it does seem to have originated with the Buddha himself.

So we have to ask ourselves why it was that the Buddha broke down the apparently unitary narma into these four subdivisions. It would seem that the Buddha was very much concerned to counteract a static view of existence. And especially concerned to counteract a static view of the human self, or human personality. We must be careful, though, not to think of the Buddha and after the Buddha the Abhidharma in greater detail, as breaking down one or two things into four or five things. It wasn't a sort of biliard ball type of analysis, if you see what I mean. It wasn't breaking down big unchanging parts into small unchanging parts. The Buddha was concerned to break apparently stable and solid things down into their constituent processes. Do you see what I mean? In such a way that one could see that the apparently stable and solid thing was just a ( ) of different streams of energy. If for instance you take up the skandha of samskara, volition. It is not that there is a thing called volition which is one of the five things that make up the human personality. No, there is a whole class of energies which are called samskaras. So in the same way for all the others, the Buddha is trying to get his disciples to see things, to think of things in terms of interacting processes, not of just mutually exclusive things. I suppose that really is the first point. Admittedly, sometimes from Buddhist literature this point doesn't really come across, especially in modern, semipopular Buddhist literature, you are told that there are five Skandhas and they are subdivided in various ways. You do get the impression of a sub-division into smaller and smaller things. It could even be that we need to recast the Abhidhamma type analysis altogether and perhaps turn more to the analyses we find in modern physics and chemistry and in modern psychology, but just retaining the general, as it were, Buddhist philosophical principles. Because the basic Buddhist philosophical principles in this respect are very, very clear. It is flux, it is change, transformation, it is flow. And one has to see the apparently stable and solid things in such terms. The Abhidhamma simply goes into the details, sometimes in a way that coincides with modern psychology, modern physics and sometimes in a way that doesn't. So it does seem that the

whole subject, in its details, needs to be looked at afresh.

WOQ/A 85 8 - 6      129

But certainly, as I said, the broad general principles are very clear indeed. A question about rupa, the four primary elements.

In the Three Jewels and the Survey you describe the 'earth' and 'water' elements as respectively the forces of cohesion and undulation. Whereas in the Mitrata Omnibus you speak of these two as solidity and resistance and fluidity and cohesiveness respectively. Would you clarify this point?

S: Is it that I am supposed to have spoken of solidity and resistance as earth and fluidity and cohesiveness as water? (v:yes) That's quite incorrect then, because cohesiveness really belongs to the earth element. So I would like to stick to the terms cohesion and undulation. So perhaps Srimala could make a note because we are going to bring about a new edition of the Mitrata Omnibus, and I think that should be corrected. There might have been some misunderstanding in the editing.

Sanghadevi: In the Buddhist dictionary the earth element is spoken of as the element of extension, and the water element there is also referred to as the element of cohesion.

S: I think that first of all we have to understand that earth, water, fire and air here are symbols. They are not scientific descriptions. Earth, you can say that it is extension, because all earth occupies space, so in a way it is the principle of extension, but that is, in a way, not sufficiently contentful, it's too abstract. Earth symbolises in the first place a sort of resistance that you encounter, it is something hard, something solid, something that sticks together, something that coheres. So in this sense one thinks of cohesion, of cohesiveness. And that seems to be the primary characteristic of earth, that it sticks together, it forms a ball. Of course, yes, it is extensive, but I don't think one can think of extension as its primary characteristic. Perhaps Nyanatiloka is trying to make it a bit more, in a way, scientific and therefore abstract than it actually is. I think it is good to try to keep one's explanations of what these elements mean as concrete and poetic, even, as possible. And also to think of them in terms of energy. Because if you think of the four, earth, water, fire, air, as cohesion, undulation, radiation and vibration, then it is clear that they are all different forms or manifestations of energy. This is why I prefer those four terms. Because what is cohesion, what is earth? It is, one might say, imploding energy, energy which is falling in on itself, rather like the force of gravitation. Then in the case of water, undulation means energy which is moving in waves. Then if one thinks of fire as radiating, it is exploding energy as distinct from imploding energy, energy which is moving outwards in all directions simultaneously. And if one speaks of air as vibration it is energy which is oscillating between different poles.

So I think that particular version, that is to say, rendering or understanding earth as cohesion, water as undulation, fire as radiation, and air as vibration has the merit of making it clear that these are basically different manifestations of energy. Therefore I prefer these renderings, even though some of the other renderings do give an idea of some other aspects of those particular areas. It is not that those particular translations, in terms of energy, exhaust the entire content of

those particular terms, earth, water, fire and air, which are, after all, very concrete. But I think the Mitrata Ominibus here needs to be brought into line with The Three Jewels and The Survey. I am just half remembering something, I think I have somewhere read, somewhere in the Abhidharma literature, that each of the elements contains a little of the other elements. Because I was thinking of Nyanatiloka's rendering of the water element as cohesion. There is a little truth in that, because water does help to hold things together, but that is not the primary characteristic of water. The primary characteristic of water is that it flows. So that therefore, one can, in terms of energy, more properly, speak of water as undulation, a wave-like motion or wavelike energy. Alright so much for that. Questions on secondary qualities of rupa. I think here I am not going to be very helpful.

'Could you expound on the secondary qualities of rupa and how they derive from the primary qualities of cohesion, undulation, radiation and vibration.'

S: I think to do this I would have to consult all the different versions of the Abhidharma, that is to say the Theravada version, the Sarvastivada version and the Yogacara version. I think that this is the sort of question that I need notice of, as they say. So I will leave that aside, because I really need to consult books that I have got at Padmaloka. Anyway, the next question.

'Is the Yogacara teaching of mind only a more sophisticated interpretation of the way we experience phenomenal existence than the teaching of the five skandhas or is it basically saying the same thing?'

S: It isn't really saying the same thing, because the Yogacara philosophy, to use that term, is really saying that there is only one skandha, whereas the standard Abhidharma teaching, that is the Abhidharma teaching of the Theravada and the Sarvastivada, says quite distinctly that there are five skandhas and that one skandha is not to be reduced to another. But the Yogacara does believe that the four other skandhas, the four skandhas other than vijñāna are different transformations of vijñāna. So that is really a quite different point of view. Or perhaps I could modify that, because the Abhidharma is not philosophical, perhaps, quite in the way that the Yogacara is. One might even say, modifying what I have already said, that it is not so much that the Abhidharma, whether Theravada or Sarvastivada doesn't reduce the five skandhas to one skandha, it is more that it doesn't make any, as it were, philosophical statement as to whether they are five, in the ultimate sense, or one. Whereas the Yogacara does, do you see what I mean? It's true that the Sarvastivada and the Theravada Abhidharma treat these five skandhas as ultimate, but they don't, in a way, say that. Because their position isn't philosophical in the way that the Yogacara's position is. But the Yogacara does, quite explicitly, say that there is in fact, in reality, only one skandha, which is vijñāna or citta, if you like, or mind. And that the others are all derivatives of that, all transformations of that in different ways. But why should the Yogacara say that? It doesn't say it for abstract philosophical reasons. Just as the five skandha

analysis is for practical reasons, similarly the one mind teaching, or mind only teaching or

doctrine is for practical reasons. And this is made quite clear in the works of (Asubhandu ?) and I think in the Lankavatara Sutra. Where ( ) for instance says in effect, if you think in terms of an object which is different from the subject you will grasp at that object. But if you do not make that sort of distinction, if you see that what appears to be an object is, in fact, a transformation of mind, you realise its non-duality with, so to speak, your mind, you will no longer grasp at it. Where there is no object to grasp, well there will be no grasping. So in a way the approach is still quite practical. It's like, for instance, you dream of a beautiful fruit and in the dream you want to reach out your hand and pluck that fruit and eat it, and at that moment you wake up. And you think, 'Oh it's just a dream, there is no fruit, the so-called fruit is just a product of my own mind'. So you laugh and you lose all desire for that fruit. Do you see what I mean? So the Yogacar~ applies this sort of approach, this sort of attitude, to the whole of existence. When you wake up, when you gain Enlightenment you realise that it has been a great dream. All the things that you desired were just products of your own mind. And in a way you have got them because you have, of course, your own mind. Put like that's it is perhaps a little over-simple, perhaps, therefore, not altogether convincing, but we can see at least a glimmering of truth in it. But certainly that is the Yogacara approach. Perhaps the argument is a little (sophisticated?), a bit like some of Shantideva's arguments against egotism and so forth, they need to be really pondered upon, otherwise they don't always sound very convincing.

Sanghadevi: Could I ask something? (S: Yes) I was trying to link it up with the Mahabhuta's. The mahabhuta's are spoken of as the great magical transformations, as if you have a perception but ybu don't actually know what is behind the perception. So I wondered if that was where the Yogacara just took it a step further and said, well yes you do have perceptions, it's in your mind; it was the same.

S: There is a broad general connection. Because it is in a way a bit of a pun, because bhuta does mean ghost, so the mahabhutas, the great elements - earth, water, fire and air - are sort of ghosts in the sense that they are appearances of something, which you perceive. They are real as appearances but you don't perceive them as they actually are. So yes, the Yogacara does maintain that you don't see things as they really are because you see things as other than your own mind, whereas in reality they are your own mind. Not your own mind in the purely personal sense, but the impersonal, universal mind. So yes, there is a broad similarity of approach. When the Abhidharma, even, speaks of the Mahabhutas in that sort of way, one might say there is the beginning of the sort of approach which found its full development in the Yogacara. The basic point being that things are not as they seem.

'In The Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism the definition of rupa skandha includes sense organs, sense objects, their mutual relationships and psychological consequences. What are the psychological consequences?'

S: I must say I am not sure what Lama Govinda has in mind

WOQ/A 85 8 - 9 132

here. Presumably in a general way there will be psychological consequences to the mutual relationship of sense organ and sense object, but what he has in mind, I can't say. It might transpire from what he actually writes. Did anyone actually look this up?

V: That's all he says, it doesn't say much more than that.

S: I must say, I can't say what he has in mind. Uut then:- 'Do they connect with the qualities of adaptability, integration, continuity, masculinity and femininity as mentioned as secondary qualities of rupa ifl Tbe Survey?'

S: No, I would say not because those secondary qualities don't seem to be, as it were, psychological. So I would say there probably isn't that connection. Alriqht, let's go ontO something that we can go into a little bit more.

'What do 'purusendriya' and 'strindrya' mean in the traditional Buddhist sense, as apposed to 'masculinity' and 'femininity' as you have described in the Western psychological sense?'

S: Perhaps we should start by looking at the meaning of the term 'indriya'. We are fimilar with The Five Indrayas, which we usually translate as the five spiritual faculties, aren't we. But actually there are all sorts of indriyas mentioned in Buddhist literature, especially in the Abhidharma. I believe there is a list of twenty-two indriyas, among which are the indriyas of male and female. To understand what exactly that means one has to look at the literal meaning of the word indriya. Sometimes it is called controlling faculty. I think I point out somewhere that it is collected with Indra. Indra is the king or ruler of the gods. So sometimes indriya is translated as dominant faculty. For instance if you think in terms of, sraddha- indriya, it is faith not just as present in the mind, but domina- ting and controlling your entire mental contents. Do you see what I am getting at? In the same way, when you have got virya as an indriya, virya dominates and controls in the same way, the entire mental contents, even the entire character, the entire behaviour. And similarly with samadhi, similarly with sati. Perhaps it is clearest in the case of sati, that is to say mindfulness or awareness. When you are mindful and aware you don't just have mindfulness and awareness, if it is develo- ped at all strongly it affects your mind, it affects your speech, it affects your attitude towards things. You become saturated with mindfulness, mindfulness is then an indriya, a dominant faculty or ruling faculty. Do you see what I mean? So we can perhaps begin to see better what is meant by the purusindriya and strindriya, the indriya, the faculty, the controThing faculty or dominant faculty or ruling faculty of 'maleness' and 'femaleness'. According to the Abhidharma the strindriya or purusindriya is that, what shall I say - that element - in the male and the female respectively, whether human or non-human which gives a certain colouring to everything that they think and do and say. Do you see what I mean? In other words it expresses the fact that your gender, or perhaps one

WOQ/A 85 8 - 10 133

should say your sex rather than your gender. Your biological- cum-psychological sex, whether male or female, gives a certain definite and distinctive colouring to your whole personality and everything that you think and do. This is what it really means. In other words, according to the Abhidharma, the difference of sex is not simply anatomical, it goes far beyond that. On the other hand it isn't exactly, just psychological. Because these indriyas are secondary qualities of rupa, and it is quite clear that rupa isn't 'matter' in the

ordinary sense. These two indriyas are attempts to account for the fact that men and women are in many ways the same but at the same time different in every respect, in the sense that, there is sort of male or female colouring to everything that a male or female does. For instance a man walks in a different way from a woman, the tone of the voice is different, perhaps the way of looking is different, even the way of looking at things is different. This distinction of these two indriyas attempts to account for that fact. Is that clear?

vidyāsi: But then every individual woman or man looks and walks in a different way.

S: Oh yes, there are differences within differences. Just as a human being looks and walks differently from an animal, animals can walk differently among themselves, a pig differently from a dog, and so on. (laughter) But none the less, according to the Abhidharma there is something distinctive in everything a female does and in everything that a male does, and that is due to the fact that there is this indriya of masculinity and femininity respectively.

Jayaprabha: But can you really say that, surely some women walk like men, for instance.

S: There are several things that one can say here. First of all you can learn to walk in an artificial or an unnatural way. Do you see what I mean, that is one possibility. But the other is, that I don't think that the Abhidharma means to suggest here that masculinity and femininity are absolutes. Because even in Buddhist literature the existence of intermediate sexual types is quite clearly recognised and there are terms for them. So one can say, that there is a scale or spectrum, spectrum would be better, from the extreme masculine to the extreme feminine. It is not that all women are absolutely feminine and all men are absolutely masculine, no, there are gradations. So you may get some men and some women who are definitely and very recognisably either one or the other, but there are other intermediate types also. So you may get someone who in many respects is female but who in certain respects behaves, acts, speaks like a man, and vice versa.

Parami: Does the Abhidharma further qualify these distinctions? Does it just divide them into masculine and feminine or does it give, maybe tertiary qualities of them? Does it give more explanation of what those. ...

S: I have a vague recollection of reading more detailed explanations. I think I remember reading somewhere that one of the expressions of this particular indriya is in gesture, for instance. A woman will gesture in a different way than a

WOQ/A 85 8 - 11 134

man. But the basic principle is that your sex affects your whole personality, as it were, to the extent that you have a sex - that is no doubt an important qualification. To the extent that you have a sex, what I mean by that is, if for instance you rise to a dhyana like level, in other words you begin to inhabit a world where sexual polarisation doesn't take place, then that itself will have a modifying effect on your whole behaviour.

Parami: But does it actually say what these qualities are, not just how they manifest but...

S: Aah, no I don't think it does. To the best of my knowledge it describes them but it

doesn't identify any particular element, saying the *strindriya* consists in sweetness and the *purusindriya* consists in harshness, it doesn't say that, not to the best of my knowledge. It is entirely phenomenological, which is of course the overall approach of the *Abhidharma* anyway.

Parami: That's a shame.

S: I seem to remember some Western author, it might have been D.H. Lawrence, saying that one's type of sexuality affected one's whole being. But then, I would add, to the extent that one has sexuality or has polarising sexuality. He didn't, no doubt, consider the possibility of rising above, or at least rising to some extent above that kind of polarisation. So, 'what do *purusindriya* and *strindriya* mean in the traditional Buddhist sense as apposed to masculinity and femininity as you have described in the Western psychological sense?' Well in a way there isn't a comparison, because the *Abhidharma* has this purely phenomenological approach. It probably would go so far as to say there is no essence of masculinity or essence of femininity apart from those particular manifestations. Alright, secondary qualities continued.

'One of the secondary qualities of *rupa* is *Hadaya-vattha*, the physical base of mind. In the Pali dictionary this is described as 'heart as the physical basis of mind'. Here it says 'heart forms the base of consciousness'. In the *Mandala Insight* this is described as a kind of very light, fine subtle matter within the organ of the heart where mind consciousness is generated. (S: *Mandala Insight* is a very late work, of course, within the last hundred years) Does mind have a physical base? Why is it traditionally localised in the heart? Does this connect with why we visualise seed-syllables in our hearts, and the body, speech, mind; head, throat, heart correlation?'

S: 'Does mind have a physical base?' In Buddhist literature generally, mind is said to have a physical base, but in the earliest literature, certainly in the *Nikayas*, and I believe in the early *Abhidharma* works, the physical base is not specified. That is quite an important point. You say, 'why is it traditionally localised in the heart?' In a sense it is not traditionally localised in the heart, at least not in the earliest tradition. In later tradition, including I think later *Abhidharma* tradition it is localised in the heart, just as in the West it tends to

WOQ/A 85 8 - 12 / 9 - 1 135

be localised in the brain or the pineal gland or whatever. But it is significant that, as far as we know, the Buddha never identified any particular physical base of the mind. The general Buddhist attitude is that what we call mind and what we call matter are interdependent. That mind depends upon matter, so called, and matter depends on mind, so called. That is the broad *Abhidharma* view. The *Yogacara*, later, goes on to reduce, so to speak, matter to mind, but the *Abhidharma* doesn't do that. But yes, it is significant that though the Buddha, and no doubt the early *Abhidharma* recognised mind as having a physical base he didn't identify that physical base with any specific organ. 'Does this connect with why we visualise seed syllables in our heart and the body speech mind...' I think probably not. The whole question of the so called connection of the body and the mind is quite a complex one. Perhaps one might say that Buddhism just approaches it differently. Certainly Buddhism has never thought of the body as consisting of matter and that matter being totally different from the mind, so as to give rise to a problem of how they can possibly interact The

Buddhist approach has always been quite different from that, it probably has emerged from what you have been reading about, the Buddhist understanding of rupa. It certainly isn't matter, it's this so-called objective content of the perceptual situation, about which there is, by the way, a question.

'In The Three Jewels you translate 'rupassa upacaya', one of the secondary qualities of rupa as integration. In N anatiloka's Buddhist dictionary it is translated as growth. Do you think integration is a more appropriate translation?'

(end tape 8)

S: It's difficult to say, I must have thought so at the time. Sometimes it is difficult to fix on one particular term as the fully adequate, or solely adequate equivalent of a Pali or Sanskrit term. Different English words express different shades of meaning of the original Pali or Sanskrit word. Upacaya rightly means more like uprising, in that sense it is more like growth, but it is not just growth in the sense of becoming bigger, it is incorporating. Rupa is of such a nature that it can incorporate things, one rupa can incorporate another rupa into its substance, as happens when we consume physical food. So growth proceeds by incorporation or by integration. So one can speak in terms either of integration or of growth. Perhaps integration is not necessarily growth, though growth always involves incorporation or integration. So, 'Do you think integration is a more appropriate translation?'. Probably, I wouldn't be too positive about that. One has, maybe, to look at the Pali term, look it up in a dictionary, see the different contexts within which it occurs and try to see what the term, or the idea behind the term, is really getting at.

'roi'd you explain what is actually happening in the perceptual situation~which-Guenther describes in his quote from Philosophy ana Psychology in the Abhidharma, which you use in the paragraph on rupa in The Three Jewels, page 103?

WOQ/A 85 9 - 2 136

S: I'll look it up. The quote is, 'the objective constituents of perceptual situations, (colours, sounds) and the "sensitivities" of the sense organs which are manifested to the person himself by a mass of bodily feeling and to others through certain visual and tactual sensa. So what is the question, 'could you explain what is actually happening in the Perceptual situation which Guenther describes?' What does one mean by what is actually happening? I think what Guenther is pointing out is that one musn't think in terms of a mutually exclusive subject/object type situation. The situation is one of experience. Let's say, to begin with, there is experience, no-one can doubt that. Whatever the nature of the experience, however you interpret it, there is experience. So what is the nature of my present experience? Well, first of all, say, in terms of colour. As I look around I see various colours, I hear various sounds, there are certain tactile sensations, certain olfactory sensations. There are certain mental states, there is a certain feeling tone to the experience. So one can say that that is the perceptual situation. Within that perceptual situation there seems to differentiate two poles. At this end, so to speak, there is the pole that I identify as myself. So I think in terms of my experience, here am I and I have an experience. But within my experience, within my seeing and my feeling and my smelling and tasting, there are certain things that are not under my control. Some things are under my control, so they make up me, my own body is under my

ow~ control so that belongs to me, that belongs to the subjective pole. But I can see other bodies which are not under my control, they move about and they do things, they speak, quite independently of me. But at the same time I perc~ve them, they are part of my perceptual situation, but they are not under my control. So there is something in the perceptual situation which is not subject, which is object. It is that which Guenther speaks of as the objective content of the perceptual situation. It is not that here is a subject perceiving an object, but there is a perceptual situation, there is experience, which differentiates into these two poles. Is that clear or not so clear? (V's yes) So when you become Enlightened, it is not that there is no longer any experience, the perceptual situation, in a sense, persists. But that differentiation into poles, or the identification of yourself with the subjective pole no longer takes place. Which means that the whole perceptual situation is expanded, clarified, illumined and so on. These are the terms in which the Yogacara tends to think. In the Yogacara teaching it is not so much that you have got a thing called matter and a thing called mind, and the thing called matter is discovered actually to be mind. It's not like that, as when, say, you discover that the thing called pot is actually made of clay, so that the clay is the reality and not the pot. It's not that, it is more that citta is the term applied to that undifferentiated substratum which is subsequently polarised into a subject and an object, or a so called mind and a so called matter.

Jayaprabha: I can't quite see how, when someone is enlightened you would still have the objective people walking around who weren't under your control ?

WOQ/A 85 9 - 3 137

S: Well one can only put it in terms of saying that, in a sense they are under your control. Because you don't have a will separate from their will. It's as though you utterly identify with them and with what they are doing, whereas before you didn't, you resisted them. It is as though that element of resistance is absent. Maybe you can, perhaps, have some sort of glimpse of this even in your ordinary relations with other people. When you completely go along with what they want or the way that they feel, there isn't that element of resistance, of you wanting one thing and they wanting another, or you wanting something from them that they are not willing to give you. Suppose you look at that latter situation, you want something from someone, they are not willing to give it. What is your psychological experience? You feel as though you are coming up against a brick wall, just like that, an impact of one hard thing on another hard thing. They won't give way and you won't give way, that's the extremity of that sort of situation. But in the more relaxed, or more Enlightened attitude there isn't that you wanting something from the other person that they are not willing to give. What they want, you want, what you want, they want. There is that sort of mutuality. So you don't experience the other person as a brick wall against which you are banging your head. You have a completely different experience, and that completely different experience carried to the nth degree is of the nature of Enlightenment, you might say. So you no longer experience the other person as a hard lump or ball of something that you are coming up against. You experience them in a completely different way, they become diaphenous or transparent because your will is not coming into collision with their will, which is what is happening most of the time. So instead of experiencing them as solid you experience them as more transparent. Everyone has had that experience, haven't they, of coming up against somebody else's will and when that happens you experience your own will as something very separate and in collision with theirs. So you experience them all the more strongly as

separate from you, apposed to you, different from you. But you don't experience them like that when you have a more relaxed attitude and when you start developing more a more insight-ful or more enlightened attitude. You just see people in a comple- tely different way.

Parami: Do you think you are moving a bit towards that expe- rience when you stop relating to people in terms of their differen- ces from you and perhaps more in a sympathetic mode?

S: Possibly. Because, for instance, when you want things from people it is usually things you haven't got, which suggests difference rather than similarity.

Parami: I actually found the objective constituents of perceptive situations, relatively easy to understand. It is the end of the quote that I found rather confusing, actually. (S: Which is that) The bit where it says, 'the sensitivities of the sense organs, which are manifested to the person himself by a mass of bodily feeling', that I could understand, but 'to others through certain visual and tactual sensa', I found a bit confusing, tacked at the end.

S: I think it is not that some people experience it in one 7ay and some in others, it is different situations which different

WOQ/A 85 9 - 4 138

people may experience at different times, or all people may experience at different times. I think he has just expressed himself carelessly. (P: It's clumsy) 'the objective constituents of perceptual situations, (colours, sounds,etc.)' well we all experience those, 'and the "sensitivities" of the sense organs which are manifest to a person himself by a mass of bodily feeling and to others as certain' - no, itts the 'and to others', which is misleading. It suggests that some experience this mass of bodliiy feeling and others the visual and tactual sensa, whereas everybody experiences both, obviously.

Parami: What it read like to me, grammatically, was that, I am sitting in this room and my sense organs are perceiving the objective constituents of this perceptual situation through my mass of bodily feelings, but that everybody else out there is experiencing it through visual and tactual sensa! (S: No, no) Which I didn't think could be right.

S: It might be grammatically, but that cannot be the meaning no. It means simply that our different senses are dominant at different times, and that colours the nature of the perceptual situation. Sometimes the object, the objective content of the perceptual situation is of a more visual type, and another time it isamore tactile type. For instance, supposing it is dark, and you just take hold of something in the dark, you experience the objective content of the perceptual situation in tactile terms. And another time you may experience it predominantly in visual terms, or maybe a combination of all of them. I think, Guenther, though very perceptive, often does express himself rather clumsily.

Parami: Yes, it's clumsy, it doesn't mean to other people, it's at other times.

S: Yes, it's more like other times.

'Could you clarify 'the philosophic usage of the term matter' as mentioned in the

paragraph on rupa?'

S: I think I was simply referring to the use of the term matter. The connection with the philosophical doctrine of materialism. That there is nothing like that in Buddhism, because Buddhism doesn't substantialise. There is no such thing as matter in a philosophical sense, a material substrate of existence. And nothing even as mind in that sort of philosophical sense. These are interpretations of experience, rather than objective realities. It is simply that, that I was getting at.

'Referring to the stones at the Tantra exhibition (Someone seems to have been fascinated by them!), mentioned on Monday evening, would you describe the presence which you experience as pertaining to rupa? If so, which of the terms used in the list of secondary qualities would you use to describe it?'

S: I think that is actually quite difficult to say. Because, the stones were instances of rupa, yes? But it is as though they conveyed something more than that, this is what I was trying to get at, it was as though one saw or experienced clearly in their case, the stones weren't just stones. That matter, so called, wasn't just matter. That there was no such thing as matter in the so called philosophical sense, no such thing as

WOQ/A 85 9 - 5 139

stones in the scientific sense, in the mineralogical, geological sense. What people seem to see as stones, or label as stones, I experience, as the Tantric Hindus did as, almost, personalities. Again, not personalities in the limited, sentimental, human sense, but instinct(?) with something that one can only call life, even, in a manner of speaking, consciousness. So I wasn't concerned to make a philosophical statement or scientific statement but just express my own reactions and responses. I really think, it is something I was going to talk about at the end, that the scientific vision as it were is a distortion of the earth. I think I would agree with Blake in that sort of sense, but perhaps we will come onto that later. The next question is of a more general kind, and in a way quite important.

'The teaching of the five skandhas is an important spiritual teaching which enables us to realise the truth of unsubstantiality, using the spacio-analytic approach. Do you think this teaching is the best way to experience this truth?'

S: Well, if it enables you to experience the truth that it presents, well, yes, it is the best way. But then the question arises, does it actually function in that way. I think for quite a lot of people, reading accounts of Buddhism in these sort of terms, if they are not careful, or if the author hasn't expressed himself very carefully, it doesn't function in the right sort of way. You get the impression of a sort of pseudo-scientific reductionism. And Govinda, quite rightly, again and again, in his writings, especially in Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism, protests against this. Because we have got a heritage of late Victorian materialism, which is really quite out of date, with people being reduced to chemical reactions and all that sort of thing. If we are not careful we think of the five skandha analysis in those sort of terms, so that humanity is reduced to something quite impersonal, just a of material elements.

Some Eastern exponents of Buddhism, almost give you that sort of impression, some writers of the Theravada. That everything that you think of as being distinctive of human life,

human beings, doesn't exist, it's all to be reduced, to be ground into some sort of powder and that powder is the reality. This is the sort of impression that sometimes is given, unfortunately. So I think one has to use this spacio-analytic approach with considerable caution. And realise that you are just seeing things in their constituent processes, you are not reducing anything to something lower and maintaining that the lower is the reality and not the higher, the higher is illusory. Say, that mind is illusory, matter is reality; it is not that. You have to be careful to say that there is matter, in a manner of speaking, yes there is mind, there are higher and higher levels of mind, but see them all in terms of processes. See them all dynamically, not static. Then the question goes on to say:-

'Does it have possible psychological danger for us on a psychological level?(I think I've dealt with that) Is the dynamic, synthetic mode more appropriate or do we need both approaches?'

S: Well really we need both approaches but perhaps we have to put a special emphasis on this dynamic, synthetic, as I have

W0Q/A 85 9 - 6 140

put it, that is, think in terms of process and continuity, not just in terms of ultimate elements. Think in terms, even, of the Nidana chain, because, one thing arising in dependence on another. In a sense, in dependence on a lower thing a higher thing arises, a higher mental state, or a higher spiritual attainment arises. So this also exercises this idea of a permanent, unchanging self, no less than does the spacio-analytic approach. But really, I think, you need both. In the Theravada, as usually taught nowadays, you almost exclusively get the spacio-analytic approach, and that does the harm, that does the damage. That cannot but be misunderstood as sometimes taught. Putting it more simply, you think in terms of growth and development, because growth and development is what the positive Nidanas are all about. So, growth and development are not possible without change, and change is not possible except on the basis of insubstantiality. If there's a permanent, unchanging self which is you for ever and ever, there is no growth, there is no development possible. All that is possible is a change of place. So I think, if one has that overall emphasis on growth and development, and understands very clearly that this implies the traditional Buddhist teaching of anata, then I think is on very firm ground. I think if one just speaks in terms of growth and development, though that isn't... I was going to say not quite the Buddhist approach, but yes, it was the early Buddhist approach, which was pointed out and emphasised by Mrs Rhys-Davids in so many of her works. So it is, at the same time, really quite traditional. But the so-called traditional Buddhism, which is really later than the Buddha's time, has got away from that truth.

Parami: I was quite interested, I was recently studying the parable of the pith, to find that the actual term growth and development was used throughout that very early text.

S: A lot of Mrs Rhys-Davids writings have recently been reprinted in Delhi. I have got all those that have been reprinted in the Order library. I suggest that you start collecting them for the Women's retreat community. Incidentally, I have started, myself, collecting books for the Women's retreat community. Among other things I have got a complete Encyclopedia

Brittanica (laughter) The latest of the old type editions, not the very latest, the macropedia and micropedia, that isn't very useful, but the 1967 one. I think it is very useful and I just managed to get hold of a second copy recently. So that is going to the Women's retreat centre. Plus other things I am collecting, of a general Buddhist nature, usually second hand copies that I pick up. Things which are out of print. So you are going to have to do some studying (laughter)

5~9Ua#~LA When you are talking about the use of the five skandhas as an analysis of where the 'I' is, is that (what you are talking about, where the 'I' comes from ?) Because at this retreat centre in Spain that quite a lot of people in the movement have been ~ing to, when I was there, the Lama was giving a teaching on Vipassana, and that was the method he was using. 'Where is the 'I' in the five skandhas?' I listened to a couple of these sessions and I had the experience afterwards, when I was leaving the retreat centre someone asked me what had been my experience, what do you think about going home and I said, 'I such and such', and he said 'which I?' And that

W0Q/A 85 9 - 7 141

seems to epitomise the danger, because it was without any real basis and experience, I felt. ( ?) And I was quite surprised really, that that was the approach.

S: I think in the case of some of the Tibetan Lamas, at least, and this applies, I think, to bikkhus and even some Zen masters, that they are the heirs of a very rich tradition, and they have learned it, they have learned it at the monastic school or college, but they haven't always fully assimilated it. Nor do they really understand, always, what it is all about. They have learned the lesson, they know all the details, they know all the terms, they can reel them all off and they can reproduce them, but they haven't, in some cases, really asked themselves, 'what is this all about, what is the Buddha really getting at? What is the purpose, what is the function, of this particular teaching?' And this actually brings me quite nicely to the sort of general point I was going to make. It is a point which I have been thinking about a bit, recently, though I have thought about it before in as much as I have touched on it, to some extent or from a certain point of view, in the paper that I have just prepared to read at the launch of my book, if the book does in fact come out in time, before I go off to Italy. It's this, putting it in very broad general terms. When we read Buddhist literature, I approach should be poetic rather than scientific. In other words, we shouldn't get lost in the literal meaning, we shouldn't get lost in the letter of the teaching. We should always try to feel and try to experience what it really means on a deeper level, what the Buddha was actually getting at. For instance, let me give you an example from poetry, to make it easier. Shelley's Ode to a Skylark - 'Hail to thee blythe spirit, bird thou never were'. So Shelly says-'bird thou never were'. He is saying to the Skylark you were never a bird. If you take that very literally and seriously someone might say that Shelly is actually saying, well he doubts that the Skylark is really a bird, he is saying it should be classified under some other zoological heading. He is saying it doesn't really belong to the bird species, it belongs to some other species, and if it isn't a bird what is it, what does Shelley think it really is? Well, this is sheer literalism which ruins the poetry, but this is how people approach religious texts. That's what I mean by approaching them scientifically instead of approaching them poetically. When Shelley says, 'bird thou never were', he is trying to express his feeling that the Skylark, though a bird means or signifies, expresses something more, symbolises, to him at least, something much more than just a bird. He is not doubting to which species it belongs to, or questioning which species of creature it belongs to. But that is exactly the way in which people approach

religious~texts and Buddhist texts, as though they give us a quasi-scientific information about the spiritual life. In a way, when you speak you cannot help expressing yourself in terms of objective facts or objective realities but that is not what you are really trying to communicate. Do you see what I am getting at? (V's: Yes) I think we should remember this whenever we are studying Buddhist texts, sutras and so on, and not get lost in the detail. Taking them so literally and treating them so literally that really we lose all contact with the actual meaning, or what the Buddha or the author of the scripture is really getting at. I think this is, in a way, the great weakness of many Theravada type writings. That they have this sort of scientific approach, this factual, literalistic approach to Buddhist teachings.

WOQ/A 85 9 - 8 142

Parami: Do you think that Mahayana texts avoid that rather more?

S: I think they do. Or perhaps one might say that Mahayana, Th a way, became aware of that, and much that found expression in the Mahayana sutras and so on, at a later date, perhaps, were cast in a particular form so as to avoid that very danger, I think. I think it is probably better to read the more inspirational texts, they are richer, in a way more poetic, say the Mahavastu. Because one needs to capture the spirit of Buddhism, that is important. The spirit has a concrete embodiment, one needs to know that too, but one mustn't be so concerned with the details of the concrete embodiment, as such, that you lose sight of the indwelling spirit.

Sanghadevi: Does this link up with, when you talk about language being metaphorical?

S: Yes indeed, yes. I think the more you realise the meta-linguistic nature of language the better you are able to use language and the more you are able to understand it, or what finds expression in language. I have attempted to read certain modern authors, I find them unreadable. I don't mean literary authors, a couple of years ago I thought I ought to acquaint myself with the works of a modern thinker, ( ) called Habermas. Have you heard of him? I found him virtually unreadable. The book might have been written by a computer, it was so impersonal, dry, so after reading a few pages I thought, no, I think I can dismiss that, because however clever, in a way, it is, it is really basically irrelevant, because he is so out of touch with reality in a deeper sense, he is so alienated.

Parami: So would you say, in a way, the better philosophers, perhaps, for what of a better term, are actually the ones who are poetic?

S: Well what does one mean by poetic and what does mean by philosopher? The well known, standard contrast between Plato and Aristotle. Plato perfectly exemplifies that, as it were, more literary, more poetic, more - sometimes more mythical approach to things. Aristotle is, as it were, more Scientific. Not that Aristotle isn't useful and doesn't have his place, but it is a completely different kind of approach.

Parami: I suppose by 'better' I meant speaks to one more or helps to modify one more.

S: It's more total. I think the language of poetry, I am coming to believe this more and more, is a more total language than the language of (science?) and therefore better adapted to

express the nature of total reality. So one might even go as far as to say that the poets are the best philosophers, the great poets, anyway.

V: (Unclear)

Parami: (Yes, Shelley did say that ?)

S: Not because of the statement that they make, we mustn't reduce them to that level, but the sort of vision they communicate.

WOQ/A 85 9 - 9 143

Parami: (Nietzsche perhaps?)

S: Perhaps, and Zarathustra. So I think literary style is a very good index to general attitude. I attach great importance to literary style. Not for narrowly literary reasons, but because style really reveals character, and reveals the nature of one's perception.

Parami: So can we expect the eternal legacy to be more poetic than The Survey?  
(laughter)

S: No, well in parts, where I am describing something like, say, the Saddharma-pundarika, but when I am describing something like the Abhidharma there is no need for it.' It is as though we are a quite 'prosy' generation and not a very poetic generation. It is quite interesting, I have been reading just a little bit of modern poetry recently. There are quite a few good modern poets but there are no really great modern poets, it would seem. When I say modern, I mean flourishing now or in the last fifty years, leaving aside the earlier people like Hardy and Yeats ( ~s a rather ambiguous case. But certainly nowadays there is no, there seems, no really great poets. And they just write short poems, usually, there is no-one producing anything very substantial and certainly no epics and no great poetic dramas, everything is on a very small scale. As though, if they do have a little insight or vision they can't really sustain it.

Parami: You don't think that is just, in a sense, people didn't recognise Shelley in his day, or...?

S: Well some did, but they were scared by his thought, which perhaps to some extent can be dissociated. For instance, they were scared by things like his 'Note to Queen Mab'. If he had just presented Queen Mab perhaps he would have got away with it but he insisted on writing all these bi~p~~rno~ poems and notes and these upset people very much. I have recently been reading a very interesting book by De Quincey. I recently acquired an incomplete set of his works, a very old one, published 1862 I think it was, ten volumes I got hold of. I would like to get hold of.. well I will probably, but anyway, there was one volume that I hadn't come across before which I have recently read, which I think is grossly underrated. Everybody knows about De Quincey's 'Confessions of an English Opium Eater', but who knows his 'Autobiographical Sketches'? They are really very good, I think I would almost put them on a higher level than the Confessions of an English Opium Eater. I am just going to mention one particular chapter. There is a chapter called The Female Infidel. This was a very beautiful young woman who De Quincey had encountered when he was quite

young, I think in his teens, I think she was invited to his mother's house under some sort of mistake or misapprehension. But she turned out to be an infidel, as they called it in those days. There were infidels around, that is to say people who denied the truth of Christianity, and they were regarded by most people with a sort of horror, as though they were almost the devil incarnate. But female infidels were very, very rare. Infidels were almost always men, but here was an infidel who was not only a woman, she was young, she was beautiful, she was very intelligent and De Quincy's mother invited all the local clergy to meet her, but she demolished all their arguments and created quite an impression. What was interesting, De Quincy's mother warned her indirectly,

WOQ/A 85 9 - 10 144

through a friend, that if she expressed her opinions in those sort of way, and it deeply shocked De Quincy's mother, no respectable woman will associate with her, and she would be left only to associate with disreputable men. So actually, this happened, it seems incredible to us, but infidelity, as it was called, not only lack of belief in Christianity but actual, explicit opposition to it, was regarded with such horror, that when the lady moved to London, despite her wealth, her beauty and social position, not respectable woman would visit her house, people dropped her. So in the end she had no female friends or companions at all. Even decent men wouldn't go near her, those who were considered socially decent, so she was only left with the disreputable men, those who didn't bother about those sorts of things, and she did come to a rather bad end. (laughter) Moral, moral, moral. (laughter) I mention it to show what people would feel about Shelley and this infidelity. They wouldn't just regard it as just his way of thinking, they regarded it with genuine feelings of shock, outrage, horror and so on. So this prevented the appreciation of his poetry, perhaps for a couple of generations.

But a female infidel was regarded with a special horror, because women were supposed to be, at that time, much better than men, innately, pure, meek, spiritual, angelic, and so a female infidel! Well just think!

Parami: A contradiction in terms.

S: Yes, a contradiction in terms. Men, well what do you expect of men they are irreligious and immoral and all the rest of it, but woman is 'the angel in the house' (groans and laughter) and here was a: +A~~nefidel, even De Quincy himself was rather shocked.

Parami: He would be wouldn't he.

S: Because an infidel meant a negation of all values, because they thought only in terms of Christian values, within they were incapable of thinking in any other way. To be an infidel it was something like..., they regarded an infidel with even greater horror than we, say, nowadays would regard the terrorist or the highjacker. It was a moral equivalent of that, the negation of all social order, of all values. And this is only less than two hundred years ago.

So this is why Shelley wasn't appreciated in his day, as much as he might have been. His widow experienced great difficulty even in bringing out his poems, for many years she couldn't because she was afraid she would be deprived of her financial support if she did so,

the financial support of the sons by their guardians. But yes, in Shelley's poetry one does find a sort of vision. He isn't Christian but he was in many ways a deeply spiritual person. There have been some recent attempts to make out that he was actually a materialist. He might have had his materialistic moments which he expressed in prose, but you can't say that his poetry expresses a materialist vision, that is nonsense. Really his poetry shows that those particular labels, materialist and idealist, they just don't apply. So I think one really has to think in terms of cultivation of vision, and perhaps one finds( ) at least of that kind of vision much more in poetry and the visual arts, than one does in science. I think one has to be careful even in asking questions, that one isn't treating, say a sutra, in this quasi-scientific way

WOQ/A 85 9 - 11 145

to such an extent that one loses sight of the vision that it is trying to communicate. Perhaps you are looking at too small a passage of the sutra and forgetting the larger context. This is one of the reasons I gave those particular series on Sutras in the way that I did, because they dwelt on large, general themes and tried to illuminate those...

(end side one)

... In some ways it would be a guide to a reading of The Legacy, or how to use it, in a sense.

Parami: You do take that approach even in the Survey, although you maybe don't express it in quite those terms, when you warn against.

S: Yes, I think this approach has become more explicit with me.

Parami: Yes, but you do warn against the scientific approach right at the start.

S: Yes, but I noticed, when I remember this very clearly when I was writing the Survey the bits that I enjoyed writing most, which came most easily and naturally were the bits that involved similes and metaphors. Because it was as if one was getting closer to the truth.

Parami: I was quite interested when you were saying about Tibetan Lamas or teachers who maybe missed the spirit. Because that does seem to be your particular contribution, in terms of how you have taught Buddhism, to try and get back to the spirit.

S: Yes. In a way this seems so obvious and so natural and maybe many people would agree with me, yes the spirit is important and not the letter, the Mahayana tradition itself says that. But even that teaching itself is taken literally, it is not really grasped, that is the pity of it.

Parami: Do you feel that is something that we, in the Order, and the Movement, should be working harder at understanding.

S: Understanding and communicating, yes. I think there needs to be, I am just coining a term here, a ~er literary approach. A poetic approach, even, to the Dharma, trying to think of the Dharma as poetry rather than as pseudo-science or a statement of facts. Poetry proceeds by way of factual statements, but the factual statements are not what essentially

poetry is all about. Shelley's 'The skylark' is not a lesson in ornithology! At the same time one mustn't become vague and wishy washy, one must at the same time think clearly, one is not to become vague or dreamy.

Parami: It is not an excuse for not understanding for something.

S: Right, yes. It is not an excuse for muddled thinking. Perhaps it is better to think of the Buddha almost as a poet, as a visionary. He does express himself in verse, sometimes, in Pali. I have mentioned somewhere, I don't know if it is the Survey, that an analogy for which some Theravada writers have a particular fondness, is of the Buddha as the great schoolmaster.

WOQ/A 85 9 - 12 146

Which arouses all the wrong sort of( ). I notice also, in Geshe Rabten's autobiography he seemed quite fond of the comparison of a factory, a monast~ry as a factory. I commented on this in my book review, does anyone remember this? It really struck me that he had come to the West and he had learned about factories and it at once struck him that a monastery was like a factory, turning out monks, and all the machinery whirring away and everybody very busy with a place in the production line. I thought it was very significant that he thought that a factory was a good comparison, a good simile for a monastery. I thought that very revealing, because I have often found that it is little things that give you away. Watch the little things, they are very revealing, and I really pounced on this as soon as I read it, I thought, 'aha, what have we got here? What does he mean by a monastery being like a factory?'. He was a very learned man, a very good man, I have met him, a very good man indeed, but a real crammer. All those years and years and decades of studying those texts, memorising. All those initiations, dozens of initia- tions a day! I can't really take that seriously, how can you assimilate initiations like that? They can't have any real spiritual meaning or significance. It's like going to University and going through the whole of English literature in a year, you cram it and you can pass examinations on it, but do you have time to stop and feel and experience this literature? Perhaps you read about Shelley and you read about his elopement and his marriages, his relationships and his textual studies of his poems, different editions, variant readings, but you lose the poetry. But very often that is what happens with the study of Buddhism, where at least some scholars are concerned. So these days I am emphasising what I call the poetic approach. Perhaps it is not a very good expression, it might be even quite misleading to people outside the Friends, but you can understand what I am getting at.

Shridevi: Maybe that is why Milarepa appeals to people.

S: Indeed, yes. Despite the rather wooden translation, but yes, it is very appealing. And another Buddhist poet I sort of discovered a couple of years ago when someone sent me a copy is the 'One robe one bowl' by Ryokan I felt very, very (~oocL) . Because it has been said that a really great poet creates a whole world. When you enter into his writings, his Poems, you are in a world which he has created, a very distinctive world which is like no other world, no other poet evolved. That is very much the case with Ryokan. All there is in

this world is himself, his bamboo hut, the forest, the bamboos - a little hedge, just a few children, one or two old neighbours, the moon, and it is a complete world, a universe, it's amazing. And it is so simple, it is not in difficult classical Japanese, apparently, it's written in quite straightforward language and apparently it translates easily with no great difficulties of classical allusions and that sort of thing. You get a very strong feeling of him and his world just from this little volume of selections. I thought that was a real discovery and so much of the Dharma comes across, it really does (repay close studies( ?) Also, when one reads the Pali sutras, say the Majjhima Nikaya, there is a lot that is very beautiful there which is often missed. The description of the monks living in the forest and maybe admiring the beauty of the night. People often skip over all that because they want to get onto the real nitty gritty, the real intellectual stuff. I mentioned this in the Survey, that the

W0Q/A 85 9 - 13 147

end of the Buddha's, so called first( ?)is usually cut where the shout goes up to all the heavens, 'well, that's all extra mythological stuff', but no, that is as important as all the rest of the discourse. These are not poetic they are not even just a frame, they are part of the picture itself, part of the total content. It is such a pity that these things are not appreciated, not understood and not valued. I think we should bear this in mind in the course of our studies, generally speaking. Perhaps we should have more reading aloud of poetic passages or poetry itself. I don't think it is an extra or a little luxury, or a cultural indulgence. I think it is quite an integral part of the spiritual life.

Parami: Something that helps open the faculty.

S: The imagination.

V: We nearly chose to do the Vimalakirti Nirvedha, on the convention.

S: It is difficult to study things like that, in a way. Because you need to take in each chapter as a whole. There are certain chapters which lend themselves to verse by verse study but only two or three, perhaps. You need to get the total impression.

Parami: We thought of using the taped lectures as a basis, studying them.

Sridevi: Maybe we could do more reciting scriptures. (S: Yes) We've done a couple of things in West London, it's very powerful.

S: Yes. At the LBC on Padmasambhava day they read a chapter through the life and on Paranirvana day the whole of the Mahapara-nirvana sutta. That's very good.

Parami: The last women's Order Mitra event we did bits of the Suvarnabhakti call and response. It was very good.

S: Yes, perhaps we should do more of that.

Jayaprabha: And learning things by heart, maybe.

S: Learning things by heart, yes. When I was quite young, Th my teens, I found it quite easy to learn poetry by heart. Lots of things that I learnt then I remember still. It is quite nice to be able to recite them to oneself. Maybe one wakes up in the middle of the night, maybe on a train journey or something like that. Then they are accesable and because you know them by heart you can reflect on them at any time. Then try to fathom the meaning more ( ) . Sometimes then they have almost a mantra like quality.

Varabhadri: It could even be developed, perhaps, as a collective practice.

S: What, learning by heart?

Varabhadri: Yes, in reatreat situations.

S: The younger you are when you do it the better. As you

WOQ/A 85 9 - 14/ 10- 1 148

get older its more difficult. I'm afraid I find that, I can't learn poetry by heart as quickly as I used to. It is quite difficult to commit two or three lines to memory now, where I could commit whole chunks to memory in those days, I still remember those chunks. But you notice in some of my talks recently I have been quoting quite a lot of poetry, haven't I. In my Tuscany talks I did this, it came quite naturally and quite spontaneously. Not that I started off with thewintention of doing that.

Parami: In the Ten Pillars you did it.

S: I did in the Ten Pillars, yes. Though probably there the poetry is rather selective, there are not many very modern or contemporary poets because they don't usually have that visionary quality, English poets. I have recently got the collected poems of Alan Ginsb~rg they are intersting but there isn't much that I feel is really poetry in the sense of having that more, what I call, visionary quality. There is very little of that nature there, and I think his poetry won't last it's an interesting record of the man, but it doesn't add up to literature, I feel, really, most of it - just a bit here and there. I doubt if I'd ever quote him in that sort of way, though ~'s a~iice ChaF, very sincere, a man of great integrity and honesty, but his poems, that's another matter entirely. Anyway perhaps we had better leave it there. Close on that poetic note.

(end of tape 9)

S: First question: Is the grief that one experiences at the death of a close friend alwa S an as ect ~f daumanas a? 7 If so does that mean that it is a kar~ically unwholesome state of mind (See Pali dictionary translation of domanassa)

S: It's usually translated as sadness or grief. I think one ftas to refer to the context here. The context is that of the Four Noble Truths. The first Noble Truth is, of course, Dukkha - suffering, bodily and mental and in the mental suffering is included domanassa - sorrow or

sadness or grief. The second Noble Truth is the cause of suffering, the cause of dukkha, which is tanha or trsna-craving. So clearly here, domanassa or grief is a result of craving. Craving is, of course, unwholesome, so the grief that you experience as a result of that unwholesome state of craving must be unwholesome. That's the straightforward answer, but it isn't as simple as that really. If we take the English word 'grief'. Or even the Sankrit word 'daumanasya' or Pali 'domanassa' - it can have quite a complex meaning. In connection with the death of a close friend the grief that you would feel is, I think, a mixed emotion. A mixture, let us say, of selfish and unselfish emotions. Of skilful and unskilful. In the first place you will perhaps feel sad, upset, you will suffer because you have lost something. Perhaps you were attached to that friend in an unskilful way, at least to some extent. But to the extent that you were attached to that friend in an unwholesome way, in an unskilful way, you will experience the domanassa, the grief, as an unskilful mental state. But, again, inasmuch as emotions are mixed, and even grief is a complex emotion, your attitude towards your friend will not have been simply one of craving, there

will have been other elements. For instance it may be that your

W0Q/A 85 10 - 149

friend had died young, before they could take full advantage of all the spiritual opportunities that they had. You will be sorry for that, but that would be a skilful sorrow because you would be sorry for that person's sake. You will regret, perhaps, that the communication that you enjoyed together has come to an end, it is not that you were attached to it in the ordinary selfish, egocentric sort of way, but that communication was a very positive thing, a spiritually helpful thing for both of you. It was contributing to the spiritual development of both of you. So the grief that you feel at the death of that close friend will be grief that that very positive experience between you, which was so useful, has come to an end. So I think that the sort of grief that one experiences at the death of a close friend isn't always merely an aspect of domanassa as defined in the Pali dictionary, it is really a much more complex emotion than that. I don't think one can speak simply in terms of craving and the experience as a result of craving, of a state of grief in the sense of a purely unskilful and unwholesome emotion. Sometimes, in human life, especially in relation to other people our emotions are very mixed indeed. Not only a mixture of skilful and unskilful, but a mixture of several kinds of skilful emotion and several kinds of unskilful emotion. Supposing, for instance, someone near and dear to you dies after a very long and painful illness. You may be glad for their sake that they had died, but on the other hand you will be very sorry to have lost that person. Again there will be a mixture of feelings. So I think we must be careful not to oversimplify the situation. We can say, yes, to the extent that the element of craving, of selfish attachment, entered into the relationship, entered into the friendship, to that extent but to that extent only will you experience domanassa as a karmically unwholesome state of mind, but mixed in with that there might well be karmically wholesome states of mind that you experience as an aspect of your grief. Sometimes in ordinary literature, ordinary speech the term grief has a quite negative connotation, but on other occasions it has a quite positive and even uplifting~

connotation. So one has to be careful to do justice to the complexity of the emotion, where it is in fact a complex emotion.

V: In terms then of vedana, if it wasn't daumanasya, I? it was a positive sorrow or grief, would it then come under saumanasya, sukkha instead of dukkha?

S: Saumanasya means gladness, but that doesn't seem to do justice to that skilful element. I don't know whether this simple classification into daumanasya and saumanasya really does justice to the situation. Perhaps one would have to go into the Abhidharma a little more deeply and try to analyse the mental state of grief in that case into a much larger number of constituent mental events. Sometimes the Theravada tradition takes a very rigid line, as it were. That if you are worldly person, if you are full of craving and attached to your friends you suffer when they die. On the other hand if you are a spiritually minded person, you are not attached to your friends then when they die you don't suffer - full stop. It isn't really as simple as that, I think. Though this sort of simple classification, simple approach might suggest that. But it is really a more complex thing. Sometimes people experience a very curious combination of emotions, they can feel happy and sad, uplifted and sorrowful all at the same time.

WOQ/A 85 10 - 3 150

Parami: That was very much the feeling that I felt came over from your poem, at Mahadharmavira's death. It is quite complex.

S: Yes. I think at the death of almost anybody you feel complex emotions. I think, perhaps, it is very rare that you feel unambiguously sorrowful or joyful emotions. Supposing a very young, promising person was to be killed by accident in very painful circumstances, then you would experience almost unmitigated grief. There would not be really any relieving feature, and relieving factor in their death, so you would just feel, more or less, just straightforward, simple grief. Even then it wouldn't be just a question of attachment. It would be grief for the sake of that person for lost of wasted opportunities. But supposing the person was much older or they suffered or anything of that sort, well the emotions are more complex. Sometimes, almost, you don't know what to feel, doubt what to feel in a strange way. Not sure what the objective situation really is and therefore not sure, really, how to respond to it emotionally. For instance, supposing someone has, for the sake of argument, a mongol child and then they lose that mongol child. You don't know whether to congratulate them or condole with them. So I think we must be careful not to oversimplify our approach to what are really, in fact, quite complex human emotions.

With most of the skandhas it is quite clear why they have been separated into their particular heaps for classification. However, with the samskaras and vijnana it is difficult to speak about them separately. Could you give us some examples to help us understand why they have been classified in such a way?

S: I wouldn't have thought, actually, that it was difficult to speak about them separately at all. Perhaps I will start with vijñāna, what it really means, usually, in the case of the Pali text or Theravada Buddhism. Or more specifically within the five skandha classification.

It is translated as consciousness, but that really isn't a very adequate translation. Probably awareness would be better, but put aside for the moment the other meanings of the word awareness, because it is sometimes used as the equivalent of jñāna. Perhaps it would be useful to compare vijñāna and jñāna. In both cases you have got 'jñāna'. If you say that jñāna is simple awareness, just awareness. You are simply aware of an object without any particular reaction at all, although maybe even that is going a bit too quickly. You are just aware. Perhaps you can say there are two kinds of awareness, the awareness that is just awareness, where there is an awareness without any subject and without any object. That is the awareness which is jñāna. Then there is awareness which is awareness by the subject of an object, that is vijñāna, the prefix 'vi' implies a separation or distinction. So you could say that jñāna, as in the five jñānas or four jñānas which are equivalent to the five Buddhas, the awareness is non-dual awareness. Whereas in the case of vijñāna the awareness is dual awareness, that is to say awareness by a subject of an object. Let's go a step further. In the context of the five skandhas one speaks of six kinds of awareness. Six kinds of awareness by a subject of an object. There is eye awareness, nose awareness

woQ/A 85 10 - 4 151

and so on. That is to say awareness by or through the five senses. So here you have got, in the case of say the eye, awareness of rūpa in the sense of visual object. So here you have got two things, you have got the object - say a tree a flower or a person, and then you have got the awareness of that particular rūpa, that particular visual form or visual object. The awareness in this case merely reflects it, it acts just like a mirror, and so on with respect to all the five physical senses. Then you have got the mano-vijñāna, which is that awareness which is aware of ideas or thoughts in the sense of mental objects. So here you have got awareness on the one hand, which is, as it were, merely reflective, it merely reflects like a mirror, it doesn't do anything. And on the other hand you have got the object as presented by this or that sense, physical sense or by the mind itself. So here we can see that awareness is, as it were, purely static. It is just like a mirror, an object appears in front of it and the mirror merely reflects it, the mirror doesn't do anything. But the essence of the saṃskāras is that in as much as they are volitions, they are active. So you can have an awareness of your own volitions, just as you can have an awareness of any part of your own mental content, so to speak, any part of your experience, any aspect of your experience. But the distinction between awareness, on the one hand - vijñāna, and the saṃskāras on the other is quite clear and quite sharp inasmuch as awareness is just mirroring, just reflecting, just seeing, so to speak, what is there. Whereas the saṃskāras are active, dynamic inasmuch as they are volitions. So the line of demarcation between these two skandhas is really quite clear.

V: Bhante, in the Pali dictionary you get the saṃskāras divided into fifty mental states. You also get consciousness divided to eighty-nine states and I think it is that which causes confusion, in that consciousness as divided in that way involves what seems to be emotions.

It involves dhyanic....

S: Well you have got the word then, citta, is the term often used for the so-called mental state. The word vijñāna is not used. Citta is, in some ways much broader and vaguer and less precise than the word vijñāna. Citta is sometimes translated as mind, or mental state and sometimes even as heart. And of course it is connected with cetana, which is used more in the sense of volition. So it is a bit confusing.

V: Yes, but the division into those eighty-nine states did seem to be under the vijñāna skandha. It did seem to include rūpa-dhyanic states, arūpa-dhyanic states and even transcendental states of consciousness, and that was the confusion.

S: But in the case of a dhyanic state, you would be in that dhyanic state, which of course would be a mental state, and one might say that you can distinguish two aspects to it, a saṃskāric aspect and a vijñāna aspect. Because inasmuch as it is a high powered state of concentration, and is skilful, you are generating skilful mental states all the time, it is of the nature of a volition. It brings about karmic results, it is karma, in a sense. But at the same time you are aware of

yourself as possessing that particular mental state, you are

WOQ/A 85 10 - 5 152

aware of that mental state, and that is the vijñāna element, you could say. It's as though those two skandhas are operating then, and as much as you have the physical body they are arising in dependence, also, on that physical body. So in that case it would seem that your ordinary volition and awareness have been raised to a much higher power than usual, in the case of the dhayana. And if it is a higher dhyana state there may be no awareness of the body, together with the awareness of that dhyana state at all. I think that distinct from the mirror like awareness and the object of that awareness is still there, even though the object is a volition.

I think that the Abhidharma teaching and classification probably needs a revision, maybe we need, even, to change our translations of these terms.

V: It did also seem, in that particular classification, under vijñāna skandha it included transcendental states. It referred to the consciousness of the stream entrant etc. (S: Yes) But then the saṃskāras only seem to talk about

S: That's true. I think I have discussed this somewhere. I think it was on one of the Tuscanys, I think it was, when they were doing the Three Jewels. I think I said then that, I can't quite remember the connection, but I think I said then that if one looked at the five skandhas classification, or the Abhidharma explanation of it very closely or literally, it would seem to involve a contradiction. Or even seem to involve a denial of the absolute hard and fast division between mundane and transcendental that usually the Theravada, including the

Abhidharma, insists upon. But as regards the distinction between the samskaras and the vijñāna, although they may be united in one's experience one can clearly distinguish between the mirror-like observing aspect and the actual (operational ?) aspect. There is something quite different.

I understand from the Axial Age lecture that at that time there were individuals in the West who perceived that man is indefinable. Since then Christian concepts of God and of human nature as sinful seem to have dominated the Western mind. However, you say Sartre arrived at the first principle of Buddhism from his own premises. Do you think that Western philosophy is now developing towards a world view increasingly more expressive of Reality?

S: The Question seems to imply that there is such a thing as Western philosophy, and it is also a completely unified phenomenon. I think that might be seriously doubted. We might even say that in the course of this century, in the West, philosophy in the traditional sense, philosophy as metaphysics, has practically been abandoned, by such people as Moore, Wittgenstein and Husserl. So I don't think there is any question of western philosophy really developing towards a world view in the traditional sense in any way. Much less still towards a world view that is expressive of reality to any extent. It's as though the traditional conception of philosophy in the west has more or less completely broken down. Is any one acquainted with this field?

Parami: Yes, a little.

WOQ/A 85 10 - 6 153

S: . . . analysis. Do you see what I mean? There is a sort of glimmering, perhaps, in some forms of existentialism, of something like a world view. But it is not really very thoroughly or systematically worked out. In the case that I referred to, in The Three Jewels, it's more like an isolated insight on the part of Sartre. I wouldn't even like to say that there was really much in common between existentialism on the one hand and Buddhism on the other.

Though there is one contemporary Western Buddhist who is trying to work out an approach to Buddhism, or explanation of Buddhism in existentialist terms. That's Steven Bachelard. There is a little booklet he has published, which is actually quite interesting and which is actually quite well done. But it is really no more than putting across Buddhism with the 'terms' of existentialism. I don't really know how useful that is. If existentialism is very widely known and familiar to people I think it would be useful but I think most of the people that we come into contact with at classes, at centres, are not familiar with existentialism so you are merely translating Buddhism from one set of terms that they didn't understand to another set of terms that they didn't understand. It would be better to explain the original Buddhism in plain English as far as one could. But perhaps to some people on the continent, maybe in France where existentialism is more common, more popular, more well known, this sort of approach might be useful. Anyway, he has accomplished this quite neatly, I would say, and put it quite clearly. The little booklet is quite well worth reading. But

anyway, this is a more general point but I mention it ~ince;there is a connection. I think, I have talked about this before, in the last, maybe two years. I don't know whether I have talked about it to the women Order Members collectively, but I think it is a quite important point. I have picked up the feeling, I have got the impression, over the last few years, that more people coming along to centres are wanting to know about the meaning and ultimate purpose of life. In other words, are looking for a philosophy to a greater extent than before. Certainly to a greater extent than was the case when I was around London and regularly taking classes and giving talks. It would seem that formerly people were much more concerned with peace of mind, a solution to their problems. But I do get the impression that a higher percentage of those coming now are looking for a philosophy. So I think perhaps we should give attention more to this aspect of Buddhism and perhaps equip ourselves better, as with regards to this aspect. So that we can discuss questions of a more general philosophical or metaphysical nature with the people who come along. It is partly for this reason that I am quite pleased that Subhuti's new book is on the Buddhist vision. Because this does give a very broad over-view of Buddhism, from, for want of a better term, a philosophical point of view. I don't know if any of you have seen his book in transcript? Did you get that sort of impression?

V: proof reading

S: Ahh, that's different, yes. So I think this book of Subhuti's from that point of view especially would be very useful. Even if you don't feel to studying Western philosophy or reading Plato 's dialogues or anything like that, at least read Subhuti's book carefully. Because it will give that over-view from a sort of philosophical

WOQ/A 85 10 - 7 154

point of view. And you then add your..., you'll not only therefore understand the Dharma better yourself, but present it, perhaps, more clearly to other people. Because Because very often we just confine ourselves..., and perhaps quite rightly confine ourselves to teaching people methods and techniques and just general principles to the extent that those principles are implied by those techniques and practices. But I~think there are more and more people coming along who are thinking about such things as the nature of existence, purpose of human life, relation between body and mind, etc. All that sort of thing. So I think we ourselves ought to be more aware of the people, their needs and perhaps take steps to meet them.

Parami: Presumably that's so you can understand their questions as much as explaining in our terms. Because you did seem to say in the Ten Pillars you thought it important that we described that Dharma in the language of the Dharma.

S: Yes, that is true. But you have to explain to people what 7that language means, very often.

Parami: So if you had a background you would be able to find a meeting ground more, is that what you mean?

S: I think what I am thinking more is that Subhuti's book *The presents* an over-view in the sense of providing one with a very broad framework. And I think one needs to appreciate the broad framework, if you like theoretical framework, within which you are living and practicing the Dharma. You can say that certain practices work, produce certain results but perhaps that isn't enough, we also need to see what we do and the results that we achieve within that broader philosophical vision.

Parami: So it's actually understand the philosophy of Buddhism more thoroughly.

S: Really it is, yes. Which means, of course, ourselves thinking and taking an interest in these matters. This is one of the reasons why I have been emphasising recently, especially in the case of the LBC that I think there should be more public lectures. Really good public lectures, because there are thinking people who approach Buddhism, let us say, via lectures of that sort rather than via Yoga classes or meditation classes or massage classes~and so on.

V: Have you picked this up mainly through your correspondence?

S: No, I think it is more from what I hear from people who are working in the centres. Or even my contact with relatively new people. New Mitras, new Friends, maybe more among the men. I am not quite sure whether women who come along nowadays share this sort of interest. I am not quite sure about that. But certainly there are more men coming along nowadays with that sort of interest. So wait for Subhuti's book. Maybe that will give you some leaders in different directions. Perhaps sometime you can compile a reading list, because it is easy to lose one's way and read things which aren't very helpful. Another thing, I mentioned this to someone today or yesterday, another thing that has happened recently among the men Order

WOQ/A 85 10 - 8 155

members and Mitras, I don't know whether there has been any parallel development among the women, but an interest has developed not just in clearer thinking but in logic. And there has been at least one logic weekend which everybody found very useful. So perhaps we should have more things of this sort. At least the knowledge of the rudiments of logic helps one to see one's own and other people's unclear thinking and faulty arguments. And one can not only have a vague idea that they are not quite right but actually be able to pinpoint where their argument goes wrong, or where it is not logical.

Parami: I have been reading a quite simple book called 'Use and Abuse of Argument', which

is actually quite good. I don't know if people know it. It's quite readable.

S: Yes. There are some quite useful little books of that sort around these days. Alright let's go on to the questions about the goal.

WOQ/A 85 10 - 9 156

## **QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION ON CHAPTER 14 OF THE THREE 'JEWELS':**

### **THE GOAL**

What is the origin of the vimoksa teaching and do all schools of Buddhism recognise' them?

S: Reference is made to the Three Vimoksas in the Pali Thanon, in the Pali suttas and also in the Abhidharma, but not much seems to have been made of them, broadly speaking. Not of all three. Quite a bit was made of the Four Viparyasas but not much was made of the vimoksas as such, except for one. There is the apranihita-vimoksa, the sunyata-vimoksa and the animitta-vimoksa. The only one that was really made much of was the sunyata-vimoksa. It's as though the Mahayana concentrated most of its energies and attention on that one. Again, some Mahayana sutras really go to town, so to speak, and they speak of tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands, and millions of vimoksas and there are long lists of vimoksas of various kinds. Gateways of liberation. That is to say aspects of reality through which one enters into the total reality. There are hundreds, if not thousands of names of vimoksas in Mahayana literature. And that sort of exuberance seems to have obscured the simplicity of the triad of vimoksas. And to the best of my knowledge the Theravada itself never developed this teaching of the Three Vimoksas. But it does seem to be a part of very early Buddhist teaching, and almost certainly originating with the Buddha himself. So I personally consider this Three Vimoksa teaching very very important and therefore I emphasise it considerably. In theory, of course, all schools of Buddhism do recognise these Three Vimoksas but they don't really make anything of them, which is a pity. I think actually, in the Pali Canon there are quite a few teachings which do seem to be quite primitive and go back to the Buddha, which no school of Buddhism has ever made anything of. Perhaps because those teachings weren't useful to them at that time. But there are some that do seem to be useful that have not been given much attention and which we do find helpful. Like the positive Nidanas or the Four Viparyasas, I think we could do quite a lot with those.

Parami: Why do you think the teaching of the vimoksas is so important?

S: First of all they are connected with the laksanas. They are connected with the three main laksanas, with dukkha, anitya, anatma; these are absolutely basic in Buddhism. So as you develop insight you develop insight into dukkha or anitya or anatma and that insight does disclose to you a certain aspect of reality. You experience a certain aspect of reality and that functions, as it were, as a gateway, as I have called it, for you. A means of access for you to

total reality. So the vimoksas represent those experiences, those doors, those gateways, those means of access. So inasmuch as they are correlated with the Three Laksanas they do correspond to extremely important aspects of reality. The main aspects. Recently I have correlated them with the three main Bodhisattvas. You have probably read about that.

P'arami: I haven't heard that but I could guess.

WOQ/A 85 10 - 9 157

S: That's all on paper. I talked about that, I think, at The last men's events in the course of the concluding remarks. But that's quite a long time ago. I have been thinking about it for some time and I just wanted to get it on record in case I happen to fall under the proverbial bus. (laughter) Or something of that sort and don't have time to put it down in writing. Yes, I think this vimoksa teaching is quite important. I think the viparyasa teaching quite important and the laksana teaching quite important.

Could you eluc'idate' the last paragraph on page 132. Could you explain in more detail why' the unbiased vim'oksa does not belong to' the ttan'sce'f'ideftal path. ~: this is a'bit of a technicality) Would this make an difference to' our' 'e'x erience of enetratin through the laksana of impe'rmanen'ce to' 'th~unbiased as 0 osed to throu~h the other Iaksanas which ertain to both P'ath a'nd Goal? If the Madhyamika sees the Path and the Goal as not separate do they have a different under'stabdiflg of the relations'hip be'twe'en the' first laksana and vimoksa, i.e. do they see the unbi'ased as perta'ining to both Path and Goal?

S: So what is this paragraph on page 32? TWhile the unbiased and the empty are reckoned as belonging to the Transcendental Path, as well as applying to Nirvana, 'imageless' vimoksa is not so reckoned. This is because in the Abhidharma the Path is defined according to the nature of its objective reference. In the case of the other vimoksas this is the Unconditioned; but the 'imageless' being occupied with actually opposing and destroying such concepts as eterna- lism and nihilism, has for its objective reference these conceptual constructions. Hence it is not reckoned as included in the Transcendental Path' That seems quite clear (laughter) No? Well let's go through it little by little. 'While the 'unbiased' and 'empty' are reckoned as belonging to the Transcendental Path, as well as applying to Nirvana, the 'imageless' vimoksa is not so reckoned.' Alright, that's a statement of fact that you don't have to understand. 'This is because in the Abhidharma the Path is defined according to the nature of its objective reference.' So what does one mean by 'objective reference'? You have got the anatma laksana and then you have got the sunyata-vimoksa, so sunyata here is your objective reference, because that is what you are talking about, that is what you are referring to. So sunyata is the objective reference, so that sunyata is transcendental or mundane?

Parami: Transcendental.

S: So it's a transcendental object and inasmuch as you are referring to or experiencing that transcendental object the Path is Transcendental too. So here both Path and Goal are

Transcendental. Similarly with regard to the 'unbiased' - which is the laksana corresponding to that?

Parami: Dukkha,

WOQ/A 85 10 - 10 158

S: Yes. Alright now look at the 'imageless' vimoksa, Uhat is its laksana?

Parami: Impermanence

S: So here your objective reference is, what does it say? '..the imageless being occupied with actually opposing and destroying such concepts as eternalism and nihilism, has for its objective reference these conceptual constructions'. So in the case of impermanence your object is not the transcen- dental, but those wrong ideas, those wrong notions which prevent~you from understanding the nature of impermanence, i.e. notions of either eternalism or nihilism, So those notions are tran~icendental or mundane?

V's Mundane.

S: They are mundane, so the Goal that you reach by destroying Them is transcendental, yes. But your attention is directed not to the transcendental as in the case of the other vimoksas but towards something which is mundane. So your Path is mundane and not transcendental. It is, in a way, a rather scholastic sort of distinction, but that is the basis.

Vidyasri: You have gone through sunyata and the signless but what about the unbiased. Because isn't the reference of the unbiased, dukkha, which is mundane? So I would have thought that the Path would be mundane and the Goal would be transcendental, but in that paragraph you say that it's transcendent, it belongs to the transcendental Path.

S: Well your attention is not, in this case, actually directed towards dukkha as such. The fact that you understand dukkha does not mean that you are thinking of dukkha or experiencing dukkha, you are not experiencing either a bias towards that which is pleasurable or a non-bias towards that which is painful. You do not think, as it were, in terms of pleasure or pain at all. So in that respect your object, your objective reference is not anything mundane. It is because you don't think in terms of pleasure or pain at all that your; attention, so to speak, is directed towards; or your objective reference is the unbiased, which is an aspect of the transcendental.

Vidyasri: Yes, but then.., I'm probably being thick but with the signless..., surely what you are doing there is not thinking of eternalism or nihilism but thinking of neither you experience the signless?

S: What is the signless? When you realise that something Th signless, that is to say it has

no characteristic mark by which it can be recognised. Or as we would say, in simpler terms, it is ineffable, it is indescribable, so it is signless in the sense that you understand that no sign, that is to say no notion or concept really applies to it. But, it is as though, and this may be in the part of the Abhidharma a slightly (end of side one) .... so when you understand that something is signless the object of your attention or consciousness is all the various signs which you realise do not apply to reality. So the purport is the Transcendental but the immediate object of

W0Q/A 85 10 - 11 159

consciousness is the concepts, especially those of eternalism and nihilism, which are mundane. Do you see what I mean? I don't know how important it is practically, but this is how the Abhidharma explains it. I don't think it is that you are being thick but that the Abhidharma is being super(refined?). So therefore, in the case of two out of the Three Vimoksas, path and Goal coincide, but in the case of the other one, animitta, Path and Goal do not coincide. Then there is a further question, 'If the Madhyamika sees the Path and Goal as not separate do they have a different understanding of the relationship between the first laksana and vimoksa, i.e. do they see the unbiased as pertaining to both ~ath and Goal?' I don't know whether they do make that point or develop the Abhidharma thinking in that way or not. I rather think that they probably don't, I think they would just regard everything as Sunyata anyway, so to speak. Because after all they regard the distinction between mundane and transcendental itself as void. So I think they would probably look at it like that, they wouldn't bother, so to speak, to work out whether any particular detail was transcendental or mundane, because they try not to operate with the concept of transcendental and mundane at all, anyway. It is a different level of discourse, a different level of understanding. So I think probably, the Madhyamika, on the level of the Abhidharma would agree with that distinction but on its own level, the level of the Madhyamika, would wipe out the whole distinction between transcendental and mundane in all respects.

Parami: Can I ask another question about the Vimoksas before you move on. You said that the only one that had had anything much made of it was Sunyata. Why? Do you think that is because Sunyata, the Void, or Emptiness and therefore insubstantiality as a laksana is the metaphysical primary?

S: I think it is metaphysically primary and the Indians were very metaphysically inclined. Whereas I tend to think that, in a way, the vimoksa of impermanence is more central. Because, it is because things are impermanent, one might say, that they are insubstantial and it is because they are impermanent that they are painful. Also, if one thinks of impermanence and( ? I, I think it is a much more concrete and comprehensible idea. If you say, for

instance to a newcomer, 'the fundamental teaching of Buddhism is that everything in this world, everything that you can imagine, subject or object, is transitory, it doesn't last, it is not the same at two consecutive instances'. He or she can understand that instantly, in a broad sense. But if you say that everything, metaphysically speaking, from a transcendental standpoint is dukkha, it is very much more difficult for them to understand that because they will think that that negates the existence of pleasurable experiences, which it doesn't. It merely says that pleasurable experiences are ultimately unsatisfactory, even though pleasurable. If you start saying to a newcomer, 'fundamental Buddhist teaching is that everything is anatma, insubstantial, has no real self', that is really getting into metaphysics and may lead to a lot of misunderstanding, confusion and even controversy. So I would personally like to shift the emphasis onto the middle *laksana* of transitoriness. Because this also links up with impermanence, it links up with death, the recollection of death. It links up with the six element

WOQ/A 85 10 - 12 160

practice. It links up, also, with so much of western literature, even. Many many poets, as I pointed out in one of those papers, dwell on impermanence. There are all sorts of links, all sorts of connections. Who speaks about insubstantiality, and not many speak about dukkha, certainly not in the full Buddhistic sense. So I really think that the *laksana* of impermanence, or transitoriness is our most important point of departure. We can go from this, if we wish, to insubstantiality, or to painfulness and suffering. Also we can go from transitoriness directly to the idea not just of change, but of development and becoming, which is a very positive thing.

Parami: I can understand all that and I can understand why it is more easily explained and more easily understood but the statement that I don't understand in what you have just said is, that it is because things are impermanent that they are insubstantial.

S: Ahh, insubstantial in the sense of anatma. Because what does atma mean? It means that things have a permanent unchanging self, whereas the truth of transitoriness teaches that everything is changing all the time. So if things are changing all the time how can there be a permanent unchanging self?

Parami: Yes, but I still..., it seems to me that things are impermanent because they have got no fixed self, which I would understand as meaning that they didn't last forever because there was nothing in them that was fixed enough to last forever.

S: I think the advantage is that if you say that things are transitory you are not bringing in any metaphysical principle. It is true that from a metaphysical point of view anatma and *sunyata* are primary. But I think it is much more simple and straightforward if you don't bring

in metaphysics which for most people are difficult to understand and controversial. You can go from transitoriness to insubstantiality if you want to. But if you talk to ordinary people just in terms of transitoriness and impermanence and therefore not clinging on to things that are impermanent, I think they will understand you much more easily and much more clearly.

Parami: Yes, I can see that.

S: And there will be less possibility of confusion. Wut, yes, metaphysically speaking the principle of anatma or sunyata is more fundamental. Perhaps it is the difference between an a priori approach and an a posteriori approach. A practical approach and a theoretical approach.

V: Dhani~adinn~~ I think in the Survey you derive insubstantiality Throm impermanence and impermanence from insubstantiality depending on whether you use an spatial-analytical approach or a dynamic-( bproach, and actually both work.

S: Yes, both work. I think probably in the West, especially as the idea of impermanence, or change, can be looked at in  
WOQ/A 85 10 - 13 161

terms of progress. One can introduce cyclical change and spiral change, that leads directly into the idea of spiritual development. The approach through that laksana is probably more useful. If someone is interested in the metaphysical implications of that then one can always introduce the other laksana, anatma. But I think the ancient Indians were very metaphysically inclined and they found more scope for their metaphysical interests~in this concept of sunyata, to a lesser extent in animitta and to a much lesser extent in apranihita.

V: ~~~iii~~din~a: Would you not need to explain anatma quite quickly to avoid someone thinking that there was something that changed, just because of the use of language when you talk about impermanence?

S: I think in the case of people who have had a smattering of knowledge of Buddhism it's important to explain that anatma does not mean that there is no soul in the sense that there is no mental or emotional element in the human being. Because some Theravadin manuals and modern little booklets almost give the impression of anatma as being a sort of materialism. Or it denies any psychical life or emotional experience. So if someone has heard about anatma or the no-soul doctrine you have to make it quite clear that Buddhism does not teach that there is no soul or no self~, it teaches that there is no unchanging soul or unchanging self. That at least you can make clear, if need be right at the outset. But not go too much into doctrinal matters unless the person is particularly interested.

It seems that from one point of view that the Path and the Goal are 'discontinuous (as when one sees spiritual progress as moving from samsara to nirvana) As one penetrates this more deeply and sees that there is a continuous flow it becomes obvious that -the Path and Goal are not discreet (as in the Three Jewels - 'the end is the extreme of the means') I take

this to represent a shift from a Hiftaya'na to a more Mahayana view. However in the taped lecture 'Buddha and Bodhisattva; Eternity and time', you say that the Path and 'the Goal are discontinuous and discrete; Path being in time and Goal out of time. Could yo'u 'say more about this seeming discrepancy?

S: I think when one speaks in terms of the Conditioned and the Unconditioned one always presupposes a layered view of reality. Higher and fllower. And when one speaks in terms of time and eternity one seems to think in that sort of way. Broadly speaking that is the way in which the Hinayana thinks, one goes from A to B and therefore A and B, whether conditioned and unconditioned or time and eternity, are discontinuous. But if they are discontinuous, if they are completely different the problem that arises is how to get from the one to the other. How do you get from one to the other, how is it logically possible to get from one to the other. On the other hand, if they are regarded as continuous then that would seem to suggest that there is no such thing as liberation, no such thing as Enlightenment. But I think perhaps that the best thing that one can do, at least as an interim measure is to think in terms of conditioned co-production.

WOQ/A 85 10 - 14 162

Because that makes it unnecessary for one to think either in terms of mundane and transcendental being either discreet or continuous. For instance, you say 'in dependence upon B, A arises'. You are not saying that the two are continuous but you are not saying that they are discreet. So that when you come to, in dependence upon samadhi arises knowledge and vision of things as they really are, in a sense there is a transition from the mundane to the transcendental. But you are not saying that samadhi is absolutely continuous with knowledge and vision of things as they really are, nore are you saying that they are discreet. You are following a middle point of view, you are saying, in dependence upon B, A arises', without committing yourself to either a philosophy of identity or to a philosophy of difference. Thus avoiding the two extremes. So that is, perhaps, the best sort of approach. This doesn't resolve the question of the relationship between time and eternity, that is a whole separate question. Also I think there is a difference between spatial thinking, thinking in terms of space and temporal thinking, or dynamic thinking, thinking in terms of time. In the case of the nidana sequence you are, in a way, thinking in terms of time because it is a question of succession, in dependence upon B, A arises. And in a way there is a contradiction, at least verbally, because when you come to the transcendental, in dependence upon knowledge and vision of things as they really are there arises dispassion, which is also transcendental. So you have got this sequence within the transcendental, so you are not thinking of the transcendental in spatial terms. I don't think that is a bad idea, because it gives the impression of the transcendental as being full of life and movement, vigour, heightened experience. Not a dead level that you reach where all movement stops. But clearly it is not the same sort of movement as in the case of that movement that is within those nidanas which are regarded as,

or classified as mundane. In other words, I am saying movement within the spiral is not the same thing as movement within the circle. Movement within the spiral is what is usually referred to as eternity, but eternity is not something which is static. But that is almost a paradox.

Parami: Do you think that the teaching of the spiral path could be more emphasised?

S: Oh yes, again this comes in Subhuti's book. It is quite central to it. Again this ties up with impermanence, because, first of all your basic principle - change, transitoriness. Then two kinds of change, cyclical and spiral and then with spiral change that is the Path, that is what you are aiming to get to. When you pass from the cycle, not just into the spiral but into that section of it which is irreversible, then you enter the stream. So there are all sorts of connections which can be very quickly and easily made if you start off from this principle of change or transitoriness.

Parami: It's almost like when you get past knowledge and vision of things as they really are, it's almost as if you have entered vimoksa or the unbiased.

S: Yes. In a way you could have entered any of the vimoksas

WOQ/A 85 10 - 15 163

because your knowledge and vision could be via this laksana or that or the other.

Parami: I understand that but just if you are seeing it in terms of impermanence and change and the actual spiral path being of that nature. Maybe it more lends itself to that.

S: Perhaps one also shouldn't suggest that one vimoksa absolutely excludes that others. Because you are concerned, though all three, with the same ultimate reality. It's rather as though, supposing a room has got three doors, you may enter through one particular door but you also see the other doors.

Jayaprabha: Going back to this thing about eternity being something which is not-static. This question of what happens when somebody dies who has perhaps been very , and you have..., is there a negation of impermanence, therefore? Because there is eternal movement.

S: There is only an eternal movement, but that is only formally eternal because it is movement.

Jayaprabha: It's not impermanence as we know it, any more. Because I...

S: It certainly isn't impermanence as we know it because Th~permanence as we know it takes away the things that we have but impermanence within the spiral increases and multiplies the things that we have, the skilful and positive things that we have. They don't react to an opposite.

In the case of the cycle, if you experience pleasure, sooner or later it will turn into pain, but within the spiral whatever pleasure, skillful~ experience, just goes on increasing and intensifying. It never reacts into its opposite. Then on the mental level, if you, as an embodied human being have attained that sort of spiral level, inasmuch as you have got a body, yes, you can experience pain in the body but you won't experience mental pain, your mental happiness and bliss will go on increasing, notwithstanding any physical suffering.

Jayaprabha: It's just interesting because this subject came up when I was talking to someone and I realised, describing the Buddha's Nirvana, they were saying that it was like an eternalism if you said that he had Nirvana but you couldn't say whether he died or not as a spiritual force.

S: Well it is no more eternalism than it is nihilism. Because you don't say that he continues to exist, nor do you say that he doesn't continue to exist. If you want to look at it poetically, and that might be the more useful. According to Mahayana teaching a Buddha on his death doesn't absolutely cease to exist. His physical body ceases to exist but his spiritual personality, for want of a better term, continues to exist and that is what is called an archetypal Bodhisattva. That is why according to some teachings Avalokitesvara is in fact that part of the Enlightened personality of the Buddha that survives physical death and goes on operating in the universe until the arising

W0Q/A 85 10 - 16

of the next embodied Buddha. That is one particular( ? Do you see what I mean? (V: Yes)

So it certainly isn't that when a Buddha dies, that is to say when his consciousness becomes detached from the physical body there is then total annihilation. That would be the extreme of annihilationism. But neither can we think of the Buddha as we know him on earth- as continuing to exist in a:~sort of personal immortality. That is the other extreme of eternalism. Nor both nor neither. If one wants to give any sort of positive expression then, you have just to resort to poetry, almost, which is not to be taken literally. So some teachings and some traditions do speak of the Bodhisattvas as being, as it were, what is left when the physical body of the incarnate Buddha has passed away. At the time of his death a purely spiritual energy is released into the universe, no longer connected with a human body and that purely spiritual energy, which is an Enlightened energy, let us say, operating for the good of all, is what we commonly speak of as a particular archetypal Bodhisattva. In the case of Shakyamuni it is Avalokiteshvara.

Padmasuri: Would that spiritual energy not have existed before the Enlightened Buddha

S: Yes and no because the Mahayana also believes or teaches that the being who we know in his last birth as Shakyamuni lived as a Bodhisattva for hundreds and thousands of lives and descended into the human world for the purpose of gaining complete Enlightenment. But at the time of his descent into the human world he was already a great Bodhisattva. So it is as a great Bodhisattva that he, as it were, goes on existing after the physical death. It's as though through ~series of lives as a great Bodhisattva developing, and then almost reaching

Enlightenment and then he takes a human birth, reaches Enlightenment and when that human body dies off, well his Bodhisattva nature, but now Enlightened, survives and goes on operating in the Universe. He is no longer a human Bodhisattva, he is an Enlightened Bodhisattva, an archetypal Bodhisattva.

Parami: Would that tie up with something you said about punya becoming Samboghakaya?

S: It could. I don't know whether the connection has been worked out but there could be a connection. Of course much the same thing takes place on the ordinary human level. You might say when you die, your physical body ceases to exist but you are not annihilated. Something which is in process of transformation, which isn't a static soul, is left over and continues. And in the case of an Enlightened being, a Buddha, what is left over and continues is what we call the archetypal Bodhisattva, or certain archetypal Bodhisattvas. This is not a teaching which is found, as far as I know, in any sutra but it is certainly a teaching that has been developed in at least Tibetan Buddhism.

V: ~hamrnadin~ How would that tie up with one Buddha on~y arising when the Dharma has disappeared from the world~' if this, say compassionate force is still existing, as it were? Yo~ said it would exist in that form until it incarnated

W0Q/A 10 - 17

again as a Buddha.

S: No, that particular archetypal Bodhisattva that, let's say arises or rearises on the physical death of the Buddha goes on operating as an archetypal Bodhisattva looking after this particular world until such time as another human being becomes a great Bodhisattva and then in his last life becomes Enlightened and then, during his earthly lifetime gives the teaching afresh.

V: ~ha~Tha~nfl~ Yes but there is the idea that within that 7nterval between two Buddhas the Dharma has disappeared. Would that ....

S: It disappears from the earth. It's as though despite the efforts of an archetypal Bodhisattva, inasmuch as he is operating from a very lofty plane, the Dharma does decline. And it has to be revived, so to speak, by someone actually operating on the earthly plane as a human being.

Jayaprabha: Bhante, I keep coming up with a god figure. Because it sounds very similar to what..., it's almost like one can always say that it was a similar thing of what a god is seen as, in some ways. Or as the God is seen as.

S: In what respect?

Jayaprabha: In that it has an effect on the world which is out..., is it out of control, does it

only work through man? Is that sort of. ...

S: Ahh, this is my personal interpretation, it is not something I have read. My view would be that it would have to have to..., that Bodhisattva, that spiritual force would have to operate through human lines which were receptive. In the case of the Christian God, God could operate through objective, physical, material nature by way of miracles. This, to the best of my knowledge would not be the Buddhist teaching. So I would say that any spiritual influence exercised by a Bodhisattva would be purely through the minds of those people more spiritually inclined who were open to such influences. I think a Bodhisattva wouldn't be able to operate, for instance, by making. ~, an archetypal Bodhisattva wouldn't be able to operate by making a house fall down on top of you and interfering in the material world, the material universe. He operates from a completely different, purely spiritual plane. Just as in the same way the Buddha does and just as in the same way in no Buddhist school is the Buddha, whether Nirmanakaya, Sambhokaya, Dharmakaya, credited with the creation of the Universe.

Parami: So Bhante, would you say that when the Bodhicitta arises in an individual or in a collective of individuals~ they are sort of tuning into this archetypal Bodhisattva who is....

S: One can look at it in that way. That's looking at it in a sort of metaphysical way. That does involve you in certain metaphysical questions and even problems. You can look at it in that metaphysical way or if you don't want to enter upon that realm you can look at it, so to speak, purely psychologically.

WOQ/A 85 10 - 18

Parami: Both would be true, would you say? Both ways of approaching it.

S: Well, both are adequate to particular purposes. If course one mustn't think that metaphysical means super-scientific. ~etaphysical even in the last analysis is metaphorical, if you see what I mean. You are not actually describing an actually existing state of affairs in just the same way that a scientist explains only that the realm or level is different. You are doing something, actually, which is completely different from that.

Vajrasuri: What you said about the Bodhisattva, (his ?) energy would operate on another level. What other level would it be with

S: It would be transcendental. Someone who was himself living on, or mainly on the mundane level could open himself or herself to that higher influence and be affected by it.

Vajrasuri: Would the arupa-loka level be a place that a Bodhisattva would ..

S: No, that is quite different, that is mundane.

Vajrasuri: That is mundane, so ...

S: Yes. An Archetypal Bodhisattva is, so to speak, an aspect of the transcendental. But I think one has to be quite careful not to try to work it all out in a sort of scientific way, which is again what the Abhidharma does. That can result in a sort of literalism which can be very misleading.

Vajrasuri: You said some Bodhisattvas, what about other Bodhisattvas, ...  
Avalokiteshvara?

S: Well you know in the scheme of the five Buddhas, particular Bodhisattvas are assigned to particular Buddhas. And particular human Buddhas are associated with particular archetypal Buddhas. For instance, in the case of Shakyamuni. Shakyamuni is the Nirmanakaya, he's the human Buddha, Amitabha is the archetypal Buddha, Avalokiteshvara is the Bodhisattva. So there is the same pattern for all five of the Buddhas whose corresponding Nirmanakayas are the historical Buddhas, so to speak, of the present aeon.

Parami: This is an aeon with five Buddhas.

S: Yes. There you are going into what might be regarded as Buddhist mythology.

Sanghadevi: This is something about time. When you talked about organic time as being ... of continuous duration did that mean that when you are experiencing organic time you would be on a spiral path?

S: No, no. The distinction.. there may be an analogy but I was actually thinking of two different experiences of time within ordinary mundane experience. Because you know yourself

W0Q/A 85 10 -19 / 11 - 1

that sometimes you can be so absorbed in doing something that you don't keep looking at the clock. And you may not know whether you have been absorbed in that particular thing for half an hour or three quarters of an hour or one hour, even two hours. Sometimes this happens with meditation. So your experience then is not measured by the clock, as it were. You might, when you open your eyes you might be quite surprised to see what the time is. So you might have had a subjective experience of say half an hour but the clock tells you that you have been engaged in that activity for an hour. So the first I call organic time and the second I call clock time. But I think that the time experience on the spiral path is more like the experience of organic time than it is like the experience of clock time. You are conscious of the passing of time, so to speak, but you don't mark the passing of time. You know that we are more conscious of the passing of time, or that time is passing slowly or passing quickly, according to our mental state. If you are waiting for someone whom you very much want to meet the time really seems to go so slowly, but again if you are engaged in some pleasurable activity the time seems to go so quickly. But it is the same time, so to speak. I find that time goes very quickly when I am writing, it is terrifying sometimes. I just get started, and I started maybe at seven o'clock or half past seven and I have just been working away for a few

minutes it sometimes seems and in comes someone with my coffee, it is eleven o'clock already. It's sometimes actually like that. So that is organic time. But when you are constantly looking at the clock and you are very conscious of the passage of time in relation to the time that is clock time.

Sanghadevi: I suppose why I linked it up with the spiral is that I have always thought of it as being more generally associated with '~creative' (inverted commas)....

S: That is true, that's why I say that the experience of time on the spiral path resembles more closely what I call organic time. It's like that but even more so.

(end tate 10) -

S: Alright, now to the arupa dhyanas.

Could there be a link between the arupa dhyanas and the gates of liberation? They seem to resemble each other, the difference being insight.

S: Of course one could say that if the difference was Thsight, well they can't really resemble each other very much. But in a sense there is a link of nomenclature, because actually the arupa dhyanas are sometimes collectively known as vimokkas, or vimokkhas in Pali. There is a list... the dhyanas themselves are sometimes known as vimokkhas in Pali. But vimokkha here doesn't have the same meaning as vimokkha as when one speaks of the Three Vimokkhas. But apart from the fact of the common nomenclature, if one takes the traditional view of the arupa dhyanas as mundane then there isn't any very great resemblance between them and the gates of liberation, inasmuch as the gates of liberation are transcendental.

WOQ/A 85 11 - 2 168

So, something to do with the goal, this is a second sheet of something that I didn't get to before.

Do you see any one of the ways of describing the goal, the negative, positive, paradoxical, symbolic, as being more valid for us practicing or are all useful?

S: I have never considered this, but I would imagine that 711 would be useful in different contexts. Perhaps I would only add one word of warning, that I think it is probably unwise to describe the goal in exclusively negative terms to anybody. This often happens with Theravada expositions, even though in the Theravada Pali scriptures there are many non-negative descriptions of the goal. But if you speak of Nirvana simply as the absence of greed, hatred and delusion, or if you speak of Enlightenment simply as the absence of craving and suffering, that isn't going to inspire people very much. So I think the emphasis probably, overall, should be on the positive, less so on the paradoxical and

symbolic and least of all on the negative; even though objectively speaking all are equally valid. I think people are inspired, usually, much more by the positive than by the negative or the paradoxical or even perhaps the symbolic. So I think one has to beware in speaking about the goal or the path, in fact the spiritual life itself, in giving it all too exclusively negative an emphasis.

Do you think as we develop more direct contact with the transcendental, as well as perhaps developing our means of expression, e.g. writing, novels, prose, art etc, that we will use any one of these ways, positive, negative, paradoxical, symbolic in particular to describe our experience? It seems for example that Indian and Chinese Buddhism describe their experiences of the transcendental in quite different ways. In what way do you think Western Buddhism will express this experience as our tradition develops?

S: I think it is very difficult to say, because Western Buddhists will presumably include not only English Buddhists but also American ones, French, German, Spanish, Finnish, Italian, and they have all got very different attitudes. So what sort of blend there will be in the way of Western Buddhism, you really can't say that, I think. Perhaps between them all they will add up to all these approaches, negative, positive, paradoxical and symbolic. But to what degree or with what degree of emphasis on this or that, I think is quite impossible to say. It could be that people of one national culture might prefer the negative approach, another national culture might prefer the positive approach, and so on. It is very difficult to foresee. Also, I don't think perhaps in the case of writing, novels, poetry and so on one usually approaches the transcendental directly and tries to give a description of it. It is more as though it is implicit in your work. Supposing you take a Zen painting of bamboos, maybe there is something there which you feel is not of this world, transcendental. But is that painting of the bamboo approaching the transcendental negatively, positively, or paradoxically, symbolically? It doesn't seem really quite appropriate, does it? It's as though the arts operate in a somewhat different way.

WOQ/A 85 11 - 3 169

Sanghadevi: I was wondering if those four classifications actually would cover every possible description of the goal or whether with time

S: Ahh, I personally think they do. I think all possible descriptions can be.., that is descriptions in words, in terms of concepts and so on, can be included in these four. I think, since the reference is to writing, prose, art etc. I think writers and artists wouldn't approach the transcendental in this way, wouldn't think of the transcendental in that way, not as artists and writers. They would have, as it were, perhaps a sense of the transcendental but it would find an indirect expression, almost, in their work. Take for instance, 'One Robe, One Bowl. There is some sense of the transcendental there but is he conceiving of the transcendental

negatively, positively, paradoxically, symbolically, it is difficult to say. So this sort of classification refers more to a sort of philosophical way of looking at things, which is not quite as of the writer or artist as such, I would say. There is a great difference between the Indian approach and the Chinese Buddhist approach to the whole of spiritual life, including the goal. The Indian is much more metaphysical, on the whole, abstract, conceptual - though there are important exceptions. The Chinese approach seems to be much more concrete, down to earth, practical and so on. The Indian will give you a long abstract discourse in Sunyata, the Chinese might just draw a picture of Bamboo. Anyway, I think that is actually all. Yes it is. What are you going to be doing tomorrow morning?

Parami: Still more of the goal.

S: There is still more of the goal. That is Sunday, and 7i11 there be more study on Monday?

Parami: We haven't decided.

S: Haven't settled that.

(discussion on what was to be done next.)

S: So that means tomorrow evenings question will be the Thst one so perhaps we will just wind up, so to speak, the whole thing. Maybe people have some further general questions covering the whole material of the study during the last week.

Next Session:

Quote:- 'Whereas ordinary coIt)~~ssion has for its object living beings conceived as separate real entities and partially enlightened compassion their constituent psycho-physical phenomena, great c~mpassion has Tor its real object their ultimate voidness'. Could you please clarify the second stage and give an example of how it might manifest?

S: One can~t really give an example of how it might manifest because, up to a point at least, all these three different kinds of compassion manifest in the same way. Though one might say that the deeper the level from which the compassion came1 the more abundantly or the more radically it would manifest.

WOQ/A 85 11 - 4 170

The partially enlightened compassion which has for its object the constituent psycho-physical phenomena is that compassion which has for its object dharmas; because as you know the Mahayana analysis is first of all of things into dharmas and then of dharmas into Sunyata. So this is what gives one one's three different levels corresponding to these three different levels of wisdom. The first is the level, as it were, (... ? )wisdom, the level from which you

see living beings as real entities. The second level is that at which you see them as broken down, so to speak, into their constituent psycho-physical phenomena and the third is that in which you see them from the standpoint of voidness. So in all three cases compassion manifests but it manifests from successively deeper levels of realisation. So for instance, out of compassion you might help someone, you might give him or her some money. But you might be perceiving that person as a real entity and be thinking that you as a real existent entity were giving something to that person as a real existent entity. Compassion would be there but it would be limited by that particular dualistic framework. Where you start seeing the apparent entity less and less as an entity and more and more in terms of the constituent dharmas or psycho-physical processes, then your compassion has, as it were another object. Your compassion, like your insight, your wisdom, goes more deeply into the object, into the apparent entity. But it goes deepest of all, of course, when you have an inner realisation of Sunyata and you see even those constituent psycho-physical forces as Sunyata. So Sunyata sees Sunyata and compassion is directed by Sunyata to Sunyata, one might say. But the objective actions might appear to be the same, though it comes from a deeper level. Because you could even sacrifice your life for somebody believing that that somebody was a real existent entity, or that you were concerned with psycho-physical processes, or that you were concerned with Sunyata. So one can't really cite an example of the second as distinct from the first and the third stages, because it is a question of a difference in attitude. But the distinction is clear isn't it, (V?s: Yes) really, between the three different kinds of Compassion, I think they require a bit of reflection on before they make sense to us. Maybe one has to look at ones' own experience and see when it is that you are regarding people as entities, out there, with:~an absolute value, and when you are regarding them as in more dynamic terms. Perhaps an example is when you begin by seeing people as men or women, so to begin with you just see men as men, women as women, and that is that. As though they are two utterly different categories. But when you see more deeply you see the common humanity behind them, manifesting in one case as men, in the other as women. So instead of seeing people in terms of male and female, you see them in terms of human beings. So you go in.., that's a deeper level. So if you have compassion towards them, it is compassion towards them not as either men or women, male or female, but as human beings. So that is an example of going deeper and directing your feeling of compassion towards that deeper level. And of course it would be coming from a deeper level. But that is a sort of analogy to what this three-fold distinction is all about.

WOQ/A 85 11 - 5 171

V: So what mundane compassion Where you experience yourself as subject and the other person as object, that kind of compassion would be more likely to degenerate into pity or

S: Oh yes. Perhaps it is a question of nomenclature. In a sense you can't really talk about compassion at this stage. It is said that there are these three kinds of compassion but the fact that one is mundane and the others are both transcendental makes such a difference that one could even argue that one shouldn't use the same term for all three. It doesn't matter though provided you understand the nature of the difference. Just as with words like love and even peace or whatever, they have got different levels of (.. °?) And sometimes those levels

are mundane as compared with transcendental. Sometimes it might seem that a common term is not really applicable.

V: It seems as though as you move through those your framework widens and somehow your compassion is more objective.

S: Yes, well more concerned with the needs of the object. It is not that you have a need to help. Alright, second question.

Can you define the differences, if any, between Prajna~aramita and Manjugosha since they are both manifestations of Transcendental Wisdom? Why is it Manjugosha and not Prajnaparamita in the triad mentioned describing the absolute person in whom Wisdom, Compassion and Power... are found inseparably united'?

S: Inasmuch as Prajnaparamita manifests or embodies Transcendental Wisdom and inasmuch as Manjugosha does too, there is really no difference between them. But there is certainly a difference of form, a difference of aspect, which is obvious. One is wisdom as represented by a white or golden female form, the other is wisdom as represented by an orange coloured or red, or black male form. One carries a sword and a book and the other carries simply a book. So there are differences of manifestation, as determined by tradition, but there is no real difference in substance' (inverted commas), since as the question says they are both manifestations of Transcendental Wisdom. Why they should appear in those different forms, or be looked at in those different forms, that is very difficult to say. We can't trace the history and development of those particular forms completely, it just as it were, happened like that. But, 'why is it Manjugosha not Prajnaparamita in the triad mentioned describing "the absolute person in whom Wisdom, Compassion and Power... are found inseparably united"?' Well that is quite simple, that's because from the very beginning it would seem there was an established triad of Avalokiteshvara, Manjugosha or Manjushri and Vajrapani, representing Compassion, Wisdom and Power. So I am simply following that tradition, they being the three best known Bodhisattvas and an established triad embodying those three aspects. They are known as the three family protectors, the three Kulanathas. They perhaps go back to a period when the Mandala of the five Buddhas hadn't been developed.

WOQ/A 85 11 - 6 172

I have gone into this in one of my parables, myths and symbols of the White Lotus sutra, lectures. Where the original Buddha figure divided into two and then into three and only then into five. So this particular triad goes back, it seems, to the period when there was only a three-fold division. One in the middle representing integral Enlightenment and flanking figures representing the two principle aspects.

Sanghadevi: You wouldn't say that Manjugosha was the active principle and

Prajnaparamita was the was the sort of quintessence of Wisdom. Because Manjugosha holds Prajnaparamita, in a sense, to his heart and he has got a sword so he is active.

S: But the Prajnaparamita which he holds to his heart is the book, it is not the figure. Prajnaparamita has a book so you could say that she is holding Manjugosha to her heart, both would be true in a way. We are more familiar with Manjugosha in the aspect of Arapachana, brandishing the sword so that is, in a sense a more active aspect. Because the saddhana relating to that aspect speaks of cutting off karma, that is unskilful karma, which is due of course to ignorance. So, yes one could also say that Manjugosha is in a way, or at least Arapachana Manjugosha represents the aspect of Wisdom which cuts off ignorance and the karmas which are produced by ignorance and so on. Prajnaparamita is spoken of as the Jinamata, the mother of the Buddhas so one could say that Prajnaparamita represented that aspect of wisdom which is, as it were, the root of Enlightenment. The cause, in a sense, of Enlightenment. So obviously there are differences of aspect, but one is concerned with the same Wisdom, the same perfection of Wisdom in both cases.

If you were ever to rewrite the chapter on the Goal would you consider changing what you have said about the BrahmaViharasbeiflg mundane in view of the fact that you have spoken about them being able to lead to Insight, into the transcendental and having a transcendental dimension?

S: I don't think I would rewrite the chapter because What I have done in the Three Jewels as well as the Survey is to expound traditional Buddhism. But to expound it as intelligently and clearly as I could and to relate it, as much as I could to one's actual spiritual life, practice, experience and so on. If I was to start giving expression to my more recent investigations or results of more recent investigations into the Brahma Viharas I would really be having to work over tradition in a much more radical way. So it wouldn't be just be rewriting a particular chapter it would be a question of writing a completely different book covering the whole field again in that new sort of way. I don't know whether I will ever be able to that, probably not because it is such a vast topic. But I have dropped all sorts of hints and given all sorts of Ideas in different seminars from time to time. So perhaps someone will get around to doing that. It is doubtful whether I shall ever produce the radically revised inter- pretation of the Buddhas teaching, or more like getting back to the Buddha's teaching, but I think I have given

WOQ/A 85 11 - 7 173

sufficient indication over the years for it to be possible for others, provided they study and think about it, to do this.

Parami: And you would think that this teaching of the Brahma Viharas would be one possible area that would be explored in that way? (S: Yes) Are there other that you would like to be explored?

S: Everything really, everything. Some I have, the Eight-Fold Path, that I have explored even in the Survey I did make the fundamental points and they are worked out to a much greater extent in the lectures that I gave. So here and there I have done it. Then with regard to the positive Nidanas and the whole interpretation of conditioned co-production, I have gone into that from time to time pretty thoroughly. There are quite a lot of other aspects too. There may be a few more that I do go into a little bit more. I have had it in mind in some time or other, I don't know whether I will ever be able to do this, it is mainly a question of time. Since we have touched on Pra~naparamita, I have had it in mind to prepare a paper sometime about Wisdom in the spiritual traditions. Wisdom as a female figure, because Wisdom appears as a female figure not only in Buddhist tradition but a number of other traditions too. So I have in fact done a little research into this and I have uncovered some quite interesting material. So I may one day be able to put it into the form of a lecture or paper. Because one might even raise the question why should Wisdom, with a capital W so persistently be embodied in the female form? Because the same tradition that does that very often speaks of individual women as being far from possessed of wisdom. So that is quite an interesting point. Why the archetype of Wisdom in the highest sense should take a female form. There is the book of Wisdom in the Bible, there is the Wisdom Sophia in the Gnostic tradition. There are many other traditions too of this nature. There are certain mystics who have had visions of Wisdom in a female form.

Parami: So why do you think that is?

S: I don't know. I haven't come to any conclus~on. A~conclusion may emerge when I bring all this material together, but at present I have no idea at all. In Sanskrit, prajna is grammatically feminine, why should it be gramatically feminine? Is it entirely fortuitous or is there some logic behind some nouns being masculine, some feminine and some neuter and some common, in certain languages? A friend of mine in India, rather an Indian C (?) used to rather ridicule this because he pointed out that the word dhari, which means beard is feminine in gender.' In Russian Christianity and also in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, there are some very curious traditions about Wisdom which are not generally known but I have done a little investigation into this. There is a whole line~of thought among some Russian mystics and theologians around the turn of the century regarding what was calle Sophiology. The teaching about the Sophia, the ( ?) Wisdom, who was very clearly distinguished from the Virgin Mary. In Western, Latin, Catholic Christianity the Virgin Mary has tended to assmilate some of these attitudes but in Eastern Orthodox Christianity the figure of Wisdom or Sophia is kept quite separate from the Virgin Mary, which is rather interesting.

WOA/A 85 11 - 8 174

She is represented as a female figure seated on a throne with crimson wings, more like an angel. That iconography is not known in Western, Latin Christianity at all. It's not very common in Eastern Orthodox Christianity but it is there and has been a subject of research and study and even spiritual practice by a handful of quite important Russian thinkers and mystics belonging to the Eastern Orthodox Church. Also there are some English.., I

haven't gone into this properly because there are no modern editions of the works but there are some well known visions by..., well not well known - known within a certain narrow circle, by some early seventeenth Century English mystics. There was a woman called, I think Jane Leader her name was, she had a whole series of visions of the divine wisdom in the seventeenth Century and wrote a book about them. The book is very difficult to get, I think there is a copy in the British Museum but it has never been reprinted. So I wanted to bring all these things together. There is lots of material in the Gnostic Gospels, some of which I have, and just see where it all led to. I thought it might be an interesting subject. So that is just one of the little projects that I have in hand, but whether I will ever be able to bring it to some conclusion I really don't know. Alright next question.

Why do you prefer to translate samyak-drsti as axial vision rather than perfect vision, which you use in the Noble Eightfold Path series?

S: I won't say that I have at present a preference but there was a time when I was in India when I was searching for more accurate or more suggestive equivalents of some of these Sanskrit terms. For instance, for a while I translated..., following Rhys-Davids norm, and I started using the word normative, instead of the word religious which I was trying to avoid, but it didn't really catch on. So in the same way at one time I was translating samyak by axial. I wasn't satisfied with right and not completely satisfied with perfect and for a while I thought maybe axial would do. Axial, of course, is related to axis, it's that upon which everything turns. So it is not just right as opposed to wrong, or even perfect as opposed to imperfect, it's that spiritual vision upon which, as though upon an axis, your whole life begins to turn. Do you see what I mean? So it is quite suggestive but I think I eventually discarded it, it seemed a bit clumsy or maybe a bit difficult to make the connection. So I more or less ended up with perfect, though it isn't a perfect word anyway. I think it is not a bad thing to have different versions of the same Pali and Sanskrit terms, it keeps us alive to the limitations of the accepted English renderings. That they are really very often quite provisional.

You said last night that the Bodhisattva's Transcendental energy was active in this universe, and I understand how we as humans can become receptive and emulate their positive qualities. Does their Transcendental energy

WOQ/A 85 11 - 9 175

fit into the flour and water simile mentioned on Monday which you used to describe how currents of psycho-physical energy manifest?

S: Well yes and no. I think you can say that there are coagulations within coagulations. It's just a question of metaphor, you are trying to suggest a very subtle influence, do you see what I mean? In a way it is the opposite of the coagulation, coagulation is comparatively gross, as it were. One is thinking just in terms of a very subtle spiritual influence which one can't really think of in spatial terms, to which one needs to open oneself in the course of one's spiritual life. Perhaps one had better just leave it there. I find it quite difficult to fit it into the

flour and water simile (laughter). Some similes are capable of indefinite extension but other similes seem useful just to illustrate or clarify one particular point but you can't enlarge upon them or elaborate them.

The centrality of the human situation seems to depend on free will. Talking about the correspondance between the human situation and Buddhahood (Three Jewels pg 102), are you referring to the Mandala of the Five Jinas? Or do you mean an Enlightened person occupies a central position in the universe because a Buddha has a Transcendental counterpart of free will?

S: It's a question of what does one mean by central, this, I think, really the point here. One thinks of the central as that which is more real, so that which is absolutely central is the absolutely real. Because extremes represent division, represent one might say untruth. Represent the periphery, the circumference. So that which is central is that which is real. So therefore, Buddhahood is central in the universe because it is Buddhahood that is most real.

And man, that is to say man in the sense of humanity, one might say is central in the universe in as much as it is man, or humanity, that manifests the highest degree of reality to which everything else is peripheral. So man on the mundane level, or humanity on the mundane level corresponds to the Buddha or Buddhahood on the Transcendental level. So you could even say, yes, there is a correspondance in all respects, including a correspondance in respect of free will.

Is Rabindranath Tagore's unity of a creative-personality which he sees as governing, penetrating and harmonising his varied creative activities (a jiban-debata, a 'life-god') analagous to the archetypal Bodhisattva of one's visualisation?

S: Some-one knows Bengali. Where did this come from? It's not from anything of mine, where..

Samata: No, I've been reading some poems and he writes about this in the beginning.

WOQ/A 85 11 - 10 176

S: Yes, jiban-debata, that is ~uite interesting. It is the god that governs one's life. I would say that we could translate that better as presiding genius. That is what it is, presiding genius.

Samata: In one's self?

S: In one's self, yes. It is that higher aspect of oneself that unifies all one's activities. I don't know to what extent that that is analagous to the archetypal Bodhisattva of one's visualisation. It is analagous to some extent, I think the archetypal Bodhisattva stands on a much higher level, but in the same line as it were. Because the archetypal Bodhisattva does represent, in a manner of speaking one's own higher self, in the light of which one is trying to integrate all one's activities, or even around which one is trying to integrate all one's

activities. And the jiban-debata does that at a comparatively lower level.

Parami: So could you say that this presiding genius would be the centre of your own mandala, in a sense, of your integrated mandala?

S: Well when one speaks of a presiding genius one is thinking of two levels, a lower level on which you are actually operating and there is a higher level, as it were from which you are being guided. And because you are being guided from that higher level and of which you may be conscious to a greater or lesser degree, there is a sort of unity or harmony upon everything that you do, all your activities.

V: It's not linked at all with the imaginal?

S: No, in the case of the archetypal Bodhisattva and the jiban-debata one is thinking of, as it were a complete personality. Whereas the imaginal is a faculty which can exist in higher and lower forms. For instance the jiban-debata might bring together your imagination and your practicality, and your rationality and all sorts of other faculties.

V: Is there such a term or personification in Western literature?

S: The genius really. Because the word genius has got quite an interesting history. The genius, which is a Latin word, was originally a sort of angel that was born with you, which sort of hovered over you. In a way your higher self which guided and directed you. So a genius is a man who has a particularly powerful guardian spirit manifesting through him, so he or she is an outstanding or striking personality.

V: You spoke about it in Art and the Spiritual Life, didn't you. Guardian deity.

S: I don't remember that but yes, indeed I have that is interesting. So in modern times the term genius has become rather debased.

Vajrasuri: When I hear the term Guided I have this..., I can't quite understand whether it is being guided from outside one or inside. It's difficult to (

WOQ/A 85 11 - 11 177

S: Well sometimes it may feel that the guidance is coming from outside and sometimes it may feel that it is coming from inside. It's as though ultimately inside and outside coincide

(end side 1)

inside one, right up there.

Vajrasuri: It's not even right up there, it's somewhere else.

S: It's difficult, even when you say somewhere else, you are still speaking in spatial

terms, (V: Yes) You really mean, in more abstract language, from another dimension, but that is still spatial. In reality there are levels, there are no levels in modern.., you have got a three story universe of heaven, earth and hell. It's really just as crude and unsophisticated as that. We like to think we no longer believe in a heaven up there and a hell down there, but our thinking is still spatial. We still speak of a higher dimension, a higher state of mind or a higher level of meditation. We can't help that. What other language can we use?

Vajrasuri: That's actually our experience, isn't it?

S: That's how it feels. But sometimes it feels in one's own experience that something is, as it were, coming down, from up there. And sometimes we actually feel that something is welling up from deep within. We do have those different experiences which are interpreted or spoken of in different spatial terms. Sometimes the language of depth is more appropriate, and sometimes the language of height is more appropriate. Some years ago there was this great disturbance created by the Bishop of Woolwich in *Honest to God*, I think it is called, wrote that perhaps it was no longer appropriate to think in terms of God the Father up there, that one should speak in terms of the ~round of being. One particular critic wrote that there was nothing novel or very interesting about that at all, it simply meant that you were replacing, sky father by earth mother. You were just replacing up there by down there, so there is no real difference, it's not really so revolutionary at all.

V: I think ( ) once said that meant that you replace God by Gob. (Laughter.)

S: No, replace God by Goddess.

V: Well that's the initials. Ground Of Being.

Vajrasuri: It's almost as though one's physical being can be guided as well.

S: In what way.

Vajrasuri: Well with painting a painting.

WOQ/A 85 11 - 12 178

S: You mean your hand guided, yes. Musicians sometimes find that, don't they.

Vajrasuri: You sit back and you wonder how on earth that happened, though you were aware that you were painting.

S: Hmm, some angel was guiding your hand. But it might be, why not speak in terms of angels guiding your hand, that might be a more truthful way of describing what happened than some other way. I mean, in ( ) tradition they speak of being inspired by the muses, guided by the muses and so on. Milton invokes the muse, doesn't he, in *Paradise Lost*.

Invokes Urania.

Vajrasuri: (unclear - Something about mind and body.)

S: But sometimes it is very difficult to distinguish the two, or to separate the two.

Marichi: Perhaps it depends on how familiar

S: Yes, it's as though there is too great a discrepancy between that and your present ordinary state of being.

Vajrasuri: But while it is happening you are not aware that there is a difference, it is once you stop and you stand back and look and realise that something has happened.

S: I think there are all sorts of possibilities. Sometimes you can feel that you are being guided from on high, as it were, when you are actually writing or speaking, and other times you may not have that awareness at all. You may think it is just you, but subsequently on reflection you start feeling that perhaps it wasn't. For instance there is the story of Hayden, I think it was Hayden, after he had composed his oratoria of the creation, when it was performed, when he heard it for the first time he said 'it came from above' - he couldn't believe that he had composed it. So he exclaimed that it came from above.

V: Isn't the dream that you described the other night of the woman who was telling you off, afterwards you thought it was like your muse, putting you in touch with the aspects that you ( ?) Would that be, would you see that as part of this (

S: Yes I think one could, yes.

Vajrasuri: The muse from the poet is often female, would the muse from a woman be male?

S: Well you tell me! (laughter)

Parami: It seems to vary.

S: Apollo 7t seems quite obvious why the muse should be female in

WOQ/A 85 11 - 12 179

the case of male because it represents, as it were, the deeper level of inspiration which is, as it were, unconscious. So as the unconscious is to the conscious, in the sense of being quite different, so the female is to the male. So it is more appropriate to embody this unconscious

with which you are not familiar in the form of the female, with which of course you are not familiar. It's the other. So I suppose logically speaking women artists and poets and so on ought to have male muses, if one can use that term. Whether that is actually the case I don't know.

Parami: I read a book about Watherine Rain C and her poetry. Somebody asked her that question, it was a series of interviews with her by another poet called Robin Skelton, and he asks her this question. It's quite interesting because she described the male figure that his her ideal figure but then at the end she s~metimes wondered if that was really it and if there wasn't another female figure lurking in the background somewhere. Which I thought was quite interesting. (S. Yes)

Marichi: Does that relate to ( ?) the wisdom figure.

S: I think that the wisdom, certainly within the Buddhist 7tradition is on a completely different level. Because that is completely transcendental. Whereas the muse, usually, is not so very much above the ordinary human level. (Parami: Yes)

Vajrasuri: You can actually have a figure where there is no gender.

S: Yes, in the muse?

Vajrasuri: Yes, neither male or female.

S: Well in a sense one might say there is but certainly lw the case of men artists and poets the muse is perceived or experienced or spoken of in terms of feminity rather than masculinity.

V: Is that what you were meaning in the aphorism in Peace Is a Fire about men being to women as angels were.... (laughter and no's)

S: No. V: I've never understood that.

S: I suppose in a way there is some sort of connection between a muse and an angel but they seem to belong to different aspects. The muse is invoked much more in connection with the arts, especially literature<sup>1</sup> whereas with the figure of the angel it seems to have a more purely spiritual connotation.

V: Why couldn't the angel relate to women then? Why wasn't it to men and women?

S: Lots of women have seen angels, all sorts of women mystics have seen angels, but many of those women mystics were very remarkably masculine characters. One could

say that. For instance, St. Catherine of Sienna, not so long ago I read her biography and it was really quite extraordinary in some ways' because she was quite a young woman at the height of her fame, she died at the age of 33. And she seemed, judging by the descriptions of her, pictures of her, she was a very slim, willowy sort of figure, but she was quite fiery. And she was always advising or exhorting her disciples, including a couple of popes, always, to be a man, don't be womanish and so on. She was always using this sort of language. St. Theresa was also somewhat like that. So - (laughter)

Samata: So are you saying that if we are more like that then we are more likely to relate to angels?'

S: No, I think what (laughter) - you are more likely to see angels the more of an individual you are and the more you grow on dhyanic levels. Because the angels correspond roughly to devas, in Buddhism, and as I said, when you reach a certain dhyana level, or any level, you perceive, as it were, beings, corresponding to that level. So corresponding to the different dhyana levels there are the different realms of the gods'. So you perceive those gods and you perceive the angels when you reach the corresponding mental state or corresponding level.

Samata: But you must have meant something. (laughter)

S: After hearing all the various questions I have been asked about that one aphorism, probably more questions than about all aphorisms put together. I really wonder whether I meant anything at all. (laughter) Perhaps I could say that in this, and other aphorisms are probably understood if they are not taken in a spirit of dead seriousness.

Parami: You don't know how many times we get asked about that one.

Samata: Yes, what ( ?) being serious, but I did just wonder.

S: Well perhaps that's all is ( The more I try to explain it the less clear it seems to become. I have really given up by this time.

Samata: But I am not clear.

S: Probably in the next edition I should add a little Thootnote, 'this aphorism is to be regarded as a Koan' (laughter)

Parami: You could just leave it out.

S: So many earnest minded ladies have (

Parami: It's on video. You were asked once at a men's event what you meant by that and you explained it quite thoroughly. It was videod.

S: I don't know whether the explanation was understood or not.

Parami: Oh yes. It might not have been agreed with but it was understood.

S: Anyway there are two more questions. I think I'll go onto the second of the two first because it seems to follow on a little bit from what we have been talking about.

Purity seems to be an important quality of Enlightenment, however it is not specifically mentioned in the chapter on the Goal. It seems to be a quality rather than an emotion or ~knowledge. Does it therefore pertain to the Goal as a dimension of the consciousness skandha or is it an aspect of the symbolic way of describing the Goal?

S: I think I would be inclined to say it was more an aspect of the symbolic way of describing the Goal. Also, don't forget, in Buddhism beauty and purity more or less co-incide. And we have got four viparyayas, where you see as pure and beautiful that which is not pure and beautiful. There is a triad in later Theravada Buddhism, not in the Tripitika, a triad of Compassion, Wisdom and Purity, which I sometimes make use of in lectures, especially in India. Because sometimes I feel that power can be misunderstood, in fact I have been wondering recently whether one shouldn't speak of Compassion, Wisdom and Energy, because I have been using power in a completely different sense and that could be confusing. But yes, I have sometimes spoken of Compassion, Wisdom and Purity and therefore, speaking iconographically, perhaps not so much of Avalokitesvara Manjughosa and Vajrapani, but rather of Avalokitesvara, Manjughosa and Vajrasattva. But on reflection it seems that there is not really all that much difference between Vajrapani and Vajrasattva in this particular context. That in a sense Vajrapani does represent purity. We tend to have a rather limited view of purity. Partly due to our Christian, not to say our Catholic, background. When you speak in terms of purity what do you primarily think in terms of, within the moral-cum-spiritual context?

V: Absence of sin.

S: Absence of sin, yes, it's sort of moral. But purity really has a much deeper meaning there. The literal meaning is freedom from any sort of stain, or freedom from any sort of speck.

Parami: Blemish.

S: Blemish. So are there only emotional blemishes? VV's: No) What blemishes are there other than emotional?

Parami: Spiritual.

S: Spiritual, yes, but a bit more specific than that.

V: Intellectual.

WOQ/A 85 11 - 15 182

S: Intellectual, yes. So that is why you have got the *Wlesavarana*, the veil of passions and the *jneyavarana* - the veil of knowables as it is literally translated, or the one might say the veil of concepts. So purity is not just purity in respect of sin or wrong emotions but also purity in respect of concepts, erroneous notions. And this is what I mentioned the other day, that Vajrapani destroys with his thunderbolt. So Vajrapani destroys the stains par excellence, the stains of ignorance, the stain of wrong views, and what could be a greater purification than that? In the *Dhammapada*, those of you who know your *Dhammapada* will remember, the Buddha says, 'Oh monks, wipe away the stain of ignorance and be free from stain', that is the greatest blemish. So in this way the figure of Vajrapani, and the figure of Vajrasattva do coincide to some extent. Because with his thunderbolt Vajrapani abolishes or wipes out those stains of ignorance that go even deeper than the stains of the passions.

Parami: So that is why you correlated him to the imageless *vimoksa*?

S: Yes. I think sometimes it is a good idea to dwell on the concept of purity. But I have also thought from time to time that if one speaks of terms not just of the *lakshanas* but of the *viparyayas*, one could have four figures. One could have *Avalokitesvara* representing compassion, *Manjughosa* or *Manjusri* representing wisdom, Vajrapani representing energy and Tara representing pure beauty. So they would seem to form a natural quaternary. Especially, perhaps the white Tara.

V: Have you got the white Tara practice translated?

S: The medium length one, we have got it at Vajraloka. The medium length one. I have got the full length one which I still have to revise, but that is very long indeed. No, not the medium length one, we have got the short one, we have yet to get the medium length one. But the short one is ( ? ) it's a couple of pages.

V: Didn't Amoghacitta get it when he went to see..?

S: Amoghacitta got it, yes, that's right. I also got it from another source and compared the two. I think Dharpo Rimpoche's secretary is preparing a translation of the intermediate version, which we hope to get.

Parami: Bhante, is there a *vimoksa* which correlates to *asubha* in the same way as the other three?

S: There isn't, actually, but I have been thinking about it and I see no reason why there shouldn't be. Because it is a *viparyasa*.

Parami: What would it be?

S: Well, one would have to practice in that particular Way and find out for oneself.

WOQ/A 85 11 - 16 183

Parami: Breakthrough.

S: But perhaps one could think purely in terms of the iWind of spiritual approach which is envisaged, say, in works like Plato's (Symposium?) where the ascent is- through the appreciation of beauty in more and more refined and spiritual forms.

Samata: The other day somebody asked if you could ( ?) something out of existence. And this seems to be the same thing, appreciating beauty more and more but then to be a gateway it couldn't be a cort~nual...

S: Yes, you'd have to make a leap, yes. But there would be a particular gateway corresponding to that very refined beauty, so the question is what name you would give to that particular gateway. At the moment I don't find it possible to say. Just an idea that occurs to me just at the moment, is that through the approach of beauty you might come to the gateway of purity. But that's just a guess.

Parami: Called Sobhana

S: Subha.

Samata: in what does that leap consist?

S: Well you have got a transition from the mundane to the transcendental. it's a dissociation from everything that is egocentric. It is a seeing through of the so-called entity of self as fundamentally an illusion. But obviously that isn't easy to do, that is an aspect of insight, a culmination of insight. Anyway, last question. I think this is going to be a simple and straightforward question.

You mentioned last night a correlation between Shakyamuni, Amitabha and Avalokitesvara. Is there, therefore, a correlation between the other four historical Buddhas and the other Dhyani Buddhas? If so, which historical Buddhas are associated with which Dhyani Buddhas?

S: There is a correlation, I can't remember it off hand. I could find out if anyone is interested, I have got the information back at padmaloka. It's the same scheme, the same threefold scheme of the historical Buddha, the archetypal Buddha and the archetypal Buddha's attendant Bodhisattva, usually two Bodhisattvas in fact, in a way corresponding to the historical Buddha's two principle attendants.

V: Last night I thought you said that Shakyamuni's active force was Avalokitesvara. So how would the two attendant Bodhisattvas fit in with that analogy?

S: I think it is from a different standpoint. Because usually when you have a Buddha in between two Bodhisattvas the Bodhisattvas represent the two principle aspects of unified Buddhahood. But when one speaks only in terms of one Bodhisattva, in this case Avalokitesvara, then he

W0Q/A 85 11 - 17 18~

represents that whole remaining archetypal aspect of that particular historical Buddha. It is a difference of standpoint.

Parami: Did you mean how would Mogdallana and Sariputra compare to? (V: No) I thought that was what you meant.

S: In the Sarvastivada they usually depict Shakyamuni with Ananda and Kashapa, not with Sariputra and Mogdallana. Sariputra definitely embodies wisdom, Mogdallana would seem to embody energy because of his great psychic powers. Ananda would seem to embody compassion because of his great kindness and Kashapa austerity and strength, one might say, severity even. He was a great ascetic. Ananda was noticeable for his kindness, it was due to his pleadings, apparently, that women were admitted into the Sangha. So he was always represented in ( ) as the patron of the bhikkhunis and the bhikkhunis especially honoured the image of Ananda.

V: He got told off for it later, didn't he.

S:

though some sources interpret that as a sort of purification of Ananda, of all his remaining faults. He had to submit to a sort of ( ) to get him from stream entry to Arahantship.

Parami: So could Kashapa represent purity?

S: Perhaps. One could say that because he is the great ascetic.

Parami: Purification (S: Yes) So you would get your

S: Yes, he is represented as a quite stern and severe, rather unsympathetic figure, apparently. But being an Arahant no doubt he couldn't really have been. Anyway, any further or final point because actually we have come to the end of all the questions. If you haven't any more questions we will just have to have a final cup of tea.

Sanghadevi: I haven't got a question, it is more that it did strike me, having finished the Goal as well just how uni~ue the human situation was. Going back to our original discussion on the first day, that as you just go further and further away from the unconscious ( ?) values....

S: But without using the energy which is in the unconscious, you bring it more and more into one's conscious attitude and refine it more and more. You don't cut yourself off from that, but you also (

Parami: it does seem to get more and more expansive as you go through the chapter.

S: I don't know how I would cover that ground now if Vdid recover it. But sometimes reading through odd sections of the Three Jewels, as I do from time to time,

WOCQ/A 85 11 - 18 185

I am a bit surprised that I could express it all so clearly at that particular time. Sometimes I wonder how I did it, which is what we were talking about earlier on. Also, perhaps with the Survey, which was written when I was 29. I gave the lectures based on it a few years before that.

V: Had you done much study?

S: Yes and no. Because my natural tendency has always iWeen to read as much as possible and widely as possible. When I was in my teens I was really dreadful, I would read all through meal times. I would often be reading and my mother would call me for lunch, I would take no notice and go on reading so again she would call me down from my room for lunch and I would be so absorbed in my book I would take no notice. in the end she would bring the plate of food up to my room and put it down in front of me and I would just eat with one hand and hold the book with the other and reading, I was as bad as that, one might say. in those days for me to read three books in a day, one in the morning, one in the afternoon, one in the evening was quite normal. So when I was in Kalimpong my reading was greatly restricted, for practical reasons, and in some ways that was a good thing because I had a limited number of good books on Buddhism, mainly translations and I read and reread these and read more and more deeply into them. I think, looking back, that that wasn't a bad thing, in view of my natural tendency to read very, very widely. I was forced to go deeper and think more about what I read.

V: Do you have such a tendency Th meditation?

S: No, I can't say that I do, though, again I wouldn't distinguish too sharply between meditation and study in that sort of way. Because I always found, I still find when I read,

especially a Buddhist text, my mind is intensely concentrated and in that sort of situation you can develop insight quite easily, which is what meditation is all about. You practice meditation, so called, in order to still your mind. But I used to find when I read these things, and I still find this, that I have not difficulty whatsoever concentrating my mind because I am so interested in those things. And because my mind is concentrated I can go deeply into those things and actually have insight into them.

V: Bhante, you studied with Jagdish Washyap, Pali. Did you study other texts with him then?

S: To some extent, I studied a few things with Dhardo Wimpoche but never to any great extent. My study of Mahayana texts was mainly by myself, but I asked people I met questions from time to time, but I couldn't get much help, I couldn't get the sort of help I wanted. Even (?) I mostly had to sort it out for myself. Looking back that probably wasn't a bad thing. But I must say I didn't find it very difficult. It is as though one could explain it in terms of bringing something over from a previous life, it often felt like that. I took up a Buddhist text and I knew what it was

WOCQ/A 85 11 - 19 186

all about. I could explain it even, to others, straight away. I didn't have any difficulty. I can't say that I had any actual recollection of studying the things in previous lives but I felt that I could understand them.

Parami: Did you only feel that about Buddhist texts or did you find that reading, say, Western philosophy or whatever else?

S: I only really felt this about Buddhist texts. I find I have to struggle with ordinary, mechanical (?), but with Buddhist texts I never had to struggle, it always seemed easy and natural. I turn to a Buddhist text nowadays and it's a sort of relief, it is all so straightforward, it is all so easy, compared with other things. It is so familiar, so natural. That's how I feel and I think I have always felt like that. Like when I read the Diamond Sutra and the Sutra of Hui Neng for the first time, and I felt so much at home with them, it was such familiar ground.

V: Do you think when you read those texts and you decided you were a Buddhist, did you have insight into them?

S: I think in retrospect I must have done.

V: Even without having practiced any meditation.

S: I have always..., meditation in a sense is capacity for absorption, and I always had that, the capacity to become absorbed without any difficulty, especially with Buddhist texts. Other things to a lesser extent.

Marichi: Do you think it was the Dharma that seemed familiar or the Buddhist texts?

S: I suppose it was the Dharma, really, and the Buddhist texts only because they recorded the Dharma. Yes, basically it was the Dharma.

Marichi: You never have problems with the language of the Buddhist texts.

S: No, I don't think so. Though I don't necessarily like, always, the language of Buddhist texts. Or rather some language I prefer more than others. I really prefer the more poetic language, like that of the Sudhana- Pundarika. I prefer that to the more abstract language, so to speak, as it usually is, of the Perfection of Wisdom. But none-the-less, all Buddhist literature, canonical - anything concerning the dharma, seems easy, straightforward, familiar, obvious. Home ground, it's always been there.

V: You have no recollection of a previous life?

WOCQ/A 85 11 - 20 1b7

S: No. I have inferred certain things. I believe I have, I think I am not mistaken here, I think I have recollections of being in the womb and I can remember when I was very small remembering that state. And I can remember what I think must have been my mother's heart beat, and I can remember the time of birth getting nearer and nearer and that rather painful emergence into the light. I have some confused recollections of that sort. I think when I was very small I had almost night-mares of having been in the womb and being born. But I don't think anything beyond that, except by inference, only by inference, not by direct recollection.

V: So when you ( ?) texts of the dharma does that mean you feel equally at home with texts from different Buddhist traditions, Chinese, Japanese?

S: I think I do. It's the Dharma. in various degrees of the dilution. Sometimes you feel that the dharma is still there but it is getting a bit diluted. Or in the case of other texts you feel that it is pretty concentrated. My objection to some forms of Japanese Buddhism is that I feel that it is getting a bit diluted. Or even some forms of Tibetan Buddhism, it is getting a bit diluted. Probably the central Sarvastavada-cum-Mahayana tradition, well yes, it's pretty concentrated.

Shridevi: You said you always had this capacity for absorption, but you still found meditation practice useful~ in the past.

S: Yes, I think mainly with regard to mindfulness. In my earlier days in Kalimpong I was very concerned with mindfulness. I also had quite a hot temper so I felt the metta bhavana would be... Not bad but hot, like my father, my father had a very hot, quick temper and I tended to have that. I have that by nature, now I am able to keep it under control. A hot temper though, not a bad temper, not a nasty temper. My father was, I remember, quite a hot tempered man, but he had it under control, he never lost control, got over it quite quickly.

V: What do you mean by the difference between hot and bad?

S: You very quickly get angry but your anger just flares up and it quickly subsides and you don't carry over anything, don't bear any grudge. But a bad temper is when you are in a definitely negative, a settled negative and hostile mood towards others and that is very easily aroused. And it doesn't really die down, it dies down in a sense but it is really there all the time. A hot temper isn't like that, it comes and it goes.

V: So have you in your life, in terms of using your time, more formal study than more formal meditation?

S: I don't think I have done really much formal study at all.

WOCQ/A 85 11 - 21 188

V: I meant study rather than ....

S: Well put it this way, I have sat and read much more than I have sat and meditated. So usually when I have sat and read, then I have been absorbed and when I have been studying Buddhist texts it has been a basis to develop insight, yes. I have always looked at study, as we call it, in that way. I think I have always been reasonably emotionally positive, I don't think I have ever had psychological problems. I find it sometimes quite difficult to understand psychological problems. I do understand in a way but...

V: ( ?) experience

S: But I don't think it is a particularly spiritual characteristic because most members of my family are like that, especially my mother and I think some of her relations. So it is in a way a bit the luck of the draw, the way you are brought up. Maybe with some original positive endowment

V: How about visualisation

S: Yes, visualisation, when I did come to that through my contact with Tibetan Lamas, I very much enjoyed and found very inspiring. That provided a completely different dimension.

Jayaprabha: Do you still do that now?

S: I still do that from time to time. Various practices which I have given to other people. But I tend to prefer the four or five that I often mention and which most people have, that is Avalokitesvara, Manjusri, Tara and Padmasambhava. And Amitabha too, they seem to be the four or five favourites, as it were.

V: Vajrasattva?

S: Yes, Vajrasattva too, that's right. Sorry I forgot it, so it's really six.

V: Why do you say that white Tara is more associated with pure beauty than Green Tara?

S: Well I am thinking in terms of the purity in the White colour, and for no other reason, really. The White Tara is a special development of the Green Tara. The Green Tara, essentially, is really the basic of (?). The White Tara practice seems really to have developed in Tibet, rather than in India itself. But the Tara practice does come from India.

Vajrasuri: From India. (S: Yes)

V: Did you have any visualisation practices that you haven't communicated.

WOCQ/A 85 11 - 22 /12 - 1 189

S: Yes, some. Some of the more specialised ones. But of course there is a whole vast range of Visualisation practices that I don't have personal experience of, because there are thousands of them. So provided people understand

(end tape 11)

the main thing is to understand the general underlying principles and where that type of practice comes within the overall scheme of practice.

Parami: How important do you think it is that one, as it were, chooses a particular visualisation at Ordination, do you think it matters a lot which one chooses, in a way?

S: In a sense it doesn't because they all (?) but if you do have a definite preference or a definite interest, well it is probably better that you follow that because at least it will

ensure that you do that particular practice. Sometimes people aren't sure or sometimes they ask me to choose and then I do, according to what I think will be most suitable. Occasionally people change, or sometimes even more often supplement or add a second practice after two or three or four years, and that is quite acceptable, provided they can keep up both. A few people have even done three or four practices to a considerable degree. In some ways the more you can do the better but you mustn't dilute your practice, or to try and spread yourself out too much.

Parami: Something I have noticed in the week we have been here is that you have a lot of times mentioned being interested in what you are doing. I was just quite curious about that, when you talked about Subhuti and what you find sparky in his approach to dharma is enthusiasm and interest. And it is like you have said about yourself that you feel you had an interest in the Dharma, and I was just quite curious as to..., it just struck me that it seems to have been a bit of a theme. I don't know whether I have just picked that up because I am interested (laughter).

S: Well usually you are interested in the things you're interested in. You get more deeply into the things you are interested in, you become better at them, you know more about them. So interest is really very important. But it is difficult to create interest artificially, you can't really say to someone that they ought to be interested in so and so. They are or they are not. So you have to find some point of interest to connect with before you can really lead people into the Dharma. So if they are interested in solving psychological problems, fair enough; if they are interested in forming friendships, fair enough; if they are interested in social contact, fair enough. You have to take them from whatever point it is they are interested in, and lead them deeper and deeper. You can't lay down that people should be interested in this or should be interested in that, not to begin with.

WOCQ/A 85 12 - 2 190

Parami: I had picked up on it because I had been thinking recently about a connection between interest and continuity. (S: Yes) That that seems quite important for us to have that.

S: Yes, because where there is real interest there will be continuity, because you will want to follow up that interest, one thing will lead to another. You might start off by being interested in Shelley and then from Shelley you get onto Italy, maybe from Italy you get to the Renaissance. From the Renaissance you get to the individual, it can link up in this sort of way.

Parami: I was also just wondering how one fosters an interest in what you know would be good to be interested in - if you know what I mean! (laughter)

S: Well one should be interested in skilful things.

Parami: One might have an idea that you could be interested in the transcendental but I

mean

S: What I think the important thing is, and I have mentioned this more than once before, you should ask yourself quite honestly what it is you are really interested in. Because you have to connect your higher ideals with that. Am I interested in food, travel, reading, what am I interested in? Exercise, cycling, camping - just be quite honest with yourself where your interest actually lies and try to connect that interest with whatever you recognise as being of higher worth or higher value. You can't ignore your interests even if they are unhealthy or un~hoJ~o~~ interests, at least you have to acknowledge their existence and try to lead the energy that you put into them into other channels. Even in the Bible there is a saying that where your heart, there will your treasure be also. Your heart is where your interest is. You can't go along for too long on simply what you think is theoretically good for you, there must be some interest, you must make a connection with your real interests. ( ?) and somehow bring that in, otherwise you won't get very far. Maybe this is why I emphasise that quite a lot. I notice a marked difference in people in this respect. You talk about something and some people respond with great interest and others are pretty indifferent for one reason or another. This is one of the things I appreciate especially about Subhuti, as I mentioned, he's always so interested or so enthusiastic if one mentions a new idea or a new point or new aspect of something. He is thrilled by that. Almost like a school boy.

Parami: Have you mentioned any new ideas in the last eight days. ...

S: I have a vague idea that I have but I can't remember. (laughing). I think there have been one or two new points and I think the appropriate persons will have to comb through the tapes or the transcripts of this. But I think there have been some new points.

WOCO/A 85 12 - 3 191

Parami: I sometimes don't know what is new or what I just haven't heard before. (S: yes) Because sometimes I feel I get excited about something and actually I think you have probably covered it loads before.

S: But new is a relative term. New to whom.

Parami: Yes, it's new to you.

S: Sometimes I am not sure myself whether I have made 7particular point before or not. Sometimes people remember my having made a point and I have forgotten that I made it. Because, after all, I am afraid I do talk so much. (laughter) Cittapala 'was almost reproachful the other day, he said we are doing our best but you keep producing more and more material and we fall behind again! He had worked out that he required one person working full time to keep abreast of what nowadays I am actually producing. He said I am only producing one hundred and fifty hours of tape material, by way of seminar, per year now. No, 150 cassettes, that's per year.

Parami: They are an hour and a half each.

S: He says it has gone right down, it used to be on 7erage 180 but now it is down to 140 cassettes per year.

Parami: Cittapala's Abhidharma.'

S: But he has certainly done very well in organising that side of things. He has been involved in it for three years now, he and Silabhadra. It's quite an important contribution.

V: To go back to practice, Bhante,

S: Yes, I did those when I was in Kalimpong. Which Weminds me, I really must some day get around to revising my version.

V: Of which one?

S: Of all o~ them.

V: (unclear)

S: I mean just give a final polish. Mainly from a riterary point of view. The (Mula-Yogas ?) especially the going for Refuge and prostration practice are very popular in the movement. A lot of people have done them. That is one of my more vivid recollections of the Order Convention that we had at Vinehall. I remember, well some of you did, I remember, did the prostrations in that big shrine room. Sometimes there were almost thirty different people doing them in the course of a day. It was quite interesting, they were doing them quite strenuously. That seemed to be the peak of that particular practice

WOCQ/A 85 12 - 4 192

within the movement. There may well be numerically more people doing it now, but I certainly haven't seen so many people doing it at the same time.

Parami: Would you like to see more Order Members doing the Mula Yogas? Or just practicing generally.

S: I would like to see ( ?)

V: You said in the men's question and answers that you thought that meditation was

something which might start being emphasised more.

S: Yes, I have been thinking about that and I have talked about it with Kamalasila too. I've even been thinking in terms of possibly a three year meditation course. Or not exactly course, but like a revision, going over the whole field of meditation up to a certain point within a period of three years, corresponding to the study course. Clearly one couldn't treat it in quite the same way. I feel that within the movement generally there needs to be an upgrading of meditation practice, just as there has been an upgrading of study. Starting with simple things like posture, which I have been talking about. I even asked Yoga teachers to take the trouble to check up on people's postures whenever they can. And I think we ought to extend and expand the mindfulness practice more. I still think that mindfulness in the broadest sense is still not practiced nearly enough in the movement.

V: How have you envisaged that happening, to extend and expand? Do you mean like in a retreat context?

S: I haven't given it much thought. I think it would have to be by way of a series of courses. I am not so sure that we should begin the series of courses before a substantial number of people have completed the three year study course. I think it would be very difficult for people to do the two concurrently. But perhaps we ought to think in terms of people who have completed the three year study course, then completing a three year, by which I mean over a period of three years, meditation revision course, let us say.

V: In terms of retreats?

S: I think it will have to be in terms of retreats, but that all needs to be worked out. I think Kamalasila is preparing some concrete suggestions.

V: Would that be for Mitras?

S: I'm thinking primarily of Order Members. It would be so that they would be able to teach, not only practice but teach meditation more effectively. Yes, I think initially more in terms of Order Members. Kamalasila is in fact very keen on this, ( ?) producing a book. Shall we put the kettle on then?