

The Venerable Sangharakshita
Question and Answer Session in Christchurch, New Zealand,
Wednesday 25th, April 1979

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_____ : ... See I was born in China among the Chinese people ... lived there up to sixteen years of age and I lived there their religion is Buddhism. Chinese Buddhism of north China is not the same Buddhism as Indochina not to say India ... unintelligible ... I believe in God, yes ... I don't know how to explain it ...

Sangharakshita: So what's the question?

_____ : towards the Christians yes ...

S: What's what actually is the question?

_____ : ... sigh ... Well he believes in God too but you see Jesus Christ there is a Jesus Christ there was a prophet but there is one God through the whole world, the whole universe ...

S: So what's the question?

_____ : The question is, Shall I break away from the Christians and become Buddhist again ...

S: One can say this, in different parts of the world there are different religions, yeah, and most people are born into one or another of these religions as a matter of sort of cultural heritage ... ah, if one is born in a Christian country you are brought up as a Christian and you think you are a Christian if you are brought up in China, in the old days at least you are brought up as a Buddhist you think that you're a Buddhist. If you're brought up in India you think that you're a Hindu because you are brought up as a Hindu. If you are born in say Iran or Turkey you are brought up as a Moslem and you think you're a Moslem. So usually our religion comes to us by way of what we call cultural conditioning. Mm, from the Buddhist point of view the Buddhist point of view is this, that your religion can't really come to you in that sort of way. Your religion means basically your development of yourself as an individual to higher and higher levels of moral and spiritual perfection Mm. So this cannot be just a matter of blind following of a cultural heritage, for instance you are not a Buddhist just because you are born in a Buddhist country, any more than you are a Christian just because you happen to be born in a Christian country. What you've got to try to do is to develop as an individual. If you find the religion into which you've been born helps fair enough you stick with that, but if you find that it doesn't help you then you have to find some other religion, some other teaching, and this is what happens with many people in the West nowadays, they find that Christianity no longer helps them, doesn't help them to develop so they look around for something else, and some of them turn to Buddhism. And of course this is what happens on a smaller scale here in New Zealand itself you know, this is why some of you are here this evening I imagine.

_____ : That's right, yes, I had some trouble (unclear)

S: Does it help you (unclear) if it does all right follow it, if it doesn't all right just disregard it and

look for something else.

_____ : Hem, Could you outline a little bit about what is involved in being a Buddhist, the practice of Buddhism.

S: If one wants to put this in just a few words ... In traditional terms being a Buddhist means what we call Going for Refuge ... Being a Buddhist doesn't just mean being born in a Buddhist country or brought up influenced by Buddhist culture. You're a Buddhist because you follow the path taught by the Buddha, and is usually summarised as what we call the Going for Refuge; This is what makes a Buddhist - a committing of yourself to what we call the Three Jewels, which represents very particular ideals. There's the Jewel of the Buddha, the Jewel of the Dharma and the Jewel of the Sangha. The Buddha jewel represents the ideal of the enlightened human being. According to the Buddha's teaching the highest being in the universe is an enlightened human being. Buddhism doesn't believe in a personal God who created the universe. Buddhism maintains the highest form of life in the universe is an enlightened human being, so enlightened humanity, spiritually enlightened humanity is the goal of every Buddhist. That is the highest ideal. To be a Buddhist means we accept that ideal of enlightened humanity as the highest ideal for us and we devote ourselves to it, commit ourselves to it, and that is what we mean when we say "to the Buddha for refuge I go". And then secondly there's the Dharma jewel which represents the ideal of the path. In order to become more or less spiritually perfect, in order to become enlightened you have to follow a specific path which consists of ethical observance, which consists of the practice of meditation, and the development of higher spiritual wisdom. And then the third jewel is the Sangha Jewel which represents the ideal of spiritual community. This means that it is very difficult to make it just by yourself, you have to make it, you have to realise the ideal by your own individual effort. If you can practise, if you can follow that path, if you can aim at that ideal in company with others who are similarly motivated then you get enormous spiritual strength and inspiration. So this is what we call the idea of the spiritual community, that you're not alone, that you're a member of the spiritual community. So when we say to the Sangha for Refuge I go it means we accept this ideal of spiritual community. If you accept the ideal of enlightened humanity as the ideal for yourself, if you accept the ideal of a path leading to that state, if you accept the ideal of the spiritual community, then you may consider yourself a Buddhist. So clearly it's not a matter of cultural heritage or purely intellectual belief or philosophy.

_____ : You say *[unclear]*

S: This is the traditional Buddhist belief, yes.

_____ : Yeah, I have said ... correct me if I'm wrong ... how many different paths to the grave, I think it is Buddhist, it was quoted to me as a Buddhist teaching, and what does it matter which way you take it with the consequence that we're all going to die anyway ... and, why become enlightened ... but if you believe in an afterlife (unclear) .

S: There is a Buddhist tradition about the afterlife. The Buddha says quite clearly that according to him there is an after life even in the form of repeated existences here on earth, the Buddha emphasises a most important thing for a human being to do is to aim at the highest degree of moral and spiritual perfection herein this life. If one does that then the whole question of life after death or no life after death becomes less and less important. And I must say myself like the Buddha says I believe in life after death but it isn't very important to me. Even if I suddenly discover that there was no life after death I'd still follow the path that I follow now because that path is intrinsically good, to follow regardless of what happens to you after death.

_____ : I believe in [unclear] my soul.

S: You see what we know is we're going to die but we don't know when. We might die tomorrow, we can't guarantee we won't die tomorrow, does that mean we're not going to do anything today, live our life regardless in the best possible way, each day that we wake up we make the most of that day.

_____ : ... I'd like to make the individual to society, I'd like to make my own wishes as an ego to societies wishes, if you have a certain concept of reward and punishment and about life after death then you are ... on yourself.

S: I would rather not think of the spiritual life in terms of reward and punishment. For me personally that doesn't mean very much, in fact if you only develop because if you don't you'll be punished then it's not really development, you just been conditioned in a particular kind of way ... your own inner development comes from the depth of yourself because you feel that that is what you really want to do what is best for you, you evolve naturally, maybe you are going to die but meanwhile you unfold as a human being just as flower unfolds ... except for the human being it is a result of conscious effort. But even if you do and there's nothing after that conscious effort to evolve will have been worthwhile, in fact it is what makes life worth living. As a being you evolve and you go from level to level.

_____ : You say to develop you have to sacrifice other things.

S: I haven't said that.

_____ : Well, you have to sacrifice to develop ...

S: I don't use also the language of sacrifice, I said just now I don't use the language of reward and punishment or even the language of sacrifice that belongs to another tradition. There are things that you have to give up, eh, there are things you will want to give up, but that's rather different from the idea of sacrifice, you know you give it up gritting your teeth because it's good for you, you've been told you have to, that's a different sort of way of looking at things. So ... I prefer not to use the language of sacrifice. I remember hearing a lecture ... ? ... in England describing the spiritual life and he was saying that the spiritual life is like climbing up the side of a mountain, and as you climb you are constantly hacking off great bleeding lumps of self, yeah, but this is not really the point anyway ... some Zen people try to make it sound a bit like that but it isn't really you just won't find this sort of language or this sort of attitude in Buddhism the language of sacrifice. To grow, to develop is not sacrifice. It may be difficult at times even painful but you don't sort of sacrifice anything in the sense in which we sacrifice in our old Western Christian Judaeo tradition yeah. In Buddhism there isn't that way of thinking ...

_____ : How does it become ...

S: Pardon?

_____ : How does it become painful?

S: How does it become ...?

_____ : Painful.

S: What growing isn't painful? When you grow up adolescence is painful, there's a difficulty of adjusting to a new level new experience but at the same time although it's painful it's also fun.

_____ : Hem. There's another question I'd like to ask you ... ? ... we have, do you believe in a cycle of your soul? You are born on this earth and you've done something wrong on this earth ... ? ... you do the punishment ...

S: We don't think quite in terms of reward and punishment eh, the Buddhists will say, you may be stupid ... your karma put you here, but one fact is indisputable, here you are you know on this earth eh.

_____ : Our soul is from a past life reborn again .(unclear) .

S: The important thing is what are you going to be in this life?

_____ : If you're going to eat a bowl of green plums you won't wait long for your punishment.

S: No you won't indeed huh [*unclear*] perhaps one shouldn't call it a punishment, it's just a natural result of one's own actions, no one is punishing you except possibly yourself. It's a healthy reaction in fact it warns you not to do that sort of thing again ... cause and effect, it would be better to speak in terms of cause and effect rather than reward and punishment.

_____ : It strikes me, this point about sacrifice, I didn't mean pain, I meant that, ah, me sitting here I sacrifice something else, everything we do we lose the opportunity to do something else.

S: This is true.

_____ : You talk about, ah, development ... well, you lose the opportunity to involve yourself in pleasures for example ...

S: You have to make up your mind what you really want to do with life, yeah, there are certain things you can't do, you decide to do certain other things. Usually if you decide to be an engineer you can't at the same time be an artist because these are two quite demanding disciplines huh. So this is one of the things that confronts us as a human being, the question of what to do with one's own life. So what I'm saying is that the best thing anybody can do is to develop, to develop as a human being from lower to higher and ever higher levels and you can do that in various ways. And if you devote yourself to that, if you commit yourself to that you will find that your basic interests, all the things that you are really interested in which mean something to you as a human being sooner or later gets involved in one way or another. So in the end, in a truer sense you don't sacrifice anything, though may seem like that the beginning [*unclear*] ... that's all.

_____ : Does the atomic worry you. Are you worried about nuclear explosion?

S: ... I don't worry about it in the sense that I lie asleep at lying awake at night you know thinking about it eh, I think about it from time to time, ah, I don't feel I can do anything personally to stop a possible atomic explosion, but I feel I can do quite a lot to mitigate circumstances, ah, to render it unlikely that it will happen, and also if it does happen to make sure that something of a spiritual tradition survives, huh, and this is what I am trying to do through the organisation of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. On the social side, yes, we do have a social concern, in fact one of the things that I say quite strongly, where I differ from some other people who are in the spiritual life; I

feel that I cannot separate the individual from the state of society, there are some conditions or states of society which help the individual to evolve more than others. This doesn't mean that if you change society the individual doesn't need to bother ... along automatically, no, changes have to be made in the individual, the individual has to grow and develop, but changes have to be made in society so that it is more easy for the individual to grow, and to develop huh, so this is why for instance in England anyway, even in New Zealand to a small extent we've got things like communities and we've got a whole range of properties which give people the opportunity to practise what we call Right Livelihood and ah, you know this whole complex of our centres, of our co-ops we regard as the nucleus of the new society. Within which people can live in a way which is more conducive to their spiritual development. So I don't agree with the idea, ah, which says that just ignore the world, concentrate on our own spiritual development, I don't think in fact that that is possible huh, at least it is not the best sort anyway.

_____ : I have a question, what you are talking about there in a situation like there is in India where there is much corruption what is your thoughts on can their religion be separated from politics in the sense that you know you have ideas of how society can develop better and you start these sort of groups where you live in a different style, can you do this without becoming involved in the political side or the section on that or should you become involved in the political side or involved to the point of using your own powers to change things corruption in a situation like that ...

S: Well it depends what you mean by using your own power, huh, yes I do I agree, yes, in India there is a lot of corruption, I lived in India twenty years and I saw plenty of it, huh, and we originally started up our activities in India, just as we started them in Britain. At present we don't attract any attention from the political people because though we are doing things in a very different way, we are trying to create a new society, we are not quite big enough to have really attracted any attention, that suits us fine because our idea is that the bigger we can become, yeah, without anybody noticing the better, therefore we have always kept a rather low profile, huh, and it is when people do become aware of our existence we will be too strong by that time for anybody to be able to do anything about it huh, but sooner or later yes there will be a direct conflict with the existing system, there is no doubt, my policy is to prolong that as long as possible because it's to our advantage, huh, to me it isn't the spirit of bravado to invite a premature conflict, is very foolish huh, so I'm hoping that the conflict may not come for years and years and it probably won't so long as I'm around. In the meantime we build ourselves up as much as we can and we expect to widen the nucleus of our new society as much as we can. As regards to sort of direct involvement in politics at present I returned to England from India about fourteen years ago and for years I sort of carefully surveyed the political scene, huh, because I'm quite interested in ... ? ... I like to know what is happening and ah I tried to see a way in which it may be possible to be politically involved without compromising one's own ideals without being involved in party politics huh, and this is in England, but carefully as I looked I could not find a single opening, yeah, which one could take which one could follow up without compromising one's own spiritual ideal. Party politics in Britain is such that it is much the same as elsewhere so I came to the conclusion the best thing I can do in Britain is to develop this movement a sort of structures of centres of communities, co-ops so on other things will come later at present we are thinking of setting up our own bank so that we become independent, huh, at least to some extent of orthodox finance and all that kind of thing we are at present investigating that possibility but you can see the lines along which I am thinking.

_____ : Inaudible.

S: Yes we have ... huh.

_____ : ...[unclear] ... a lot of Indian people in England ...

S: Ah, no they haven't, a few of them sort of venture along sometimes, most Indians who are in England are there on a short term basis to do either one of two things; to make as much money as possible [unclear] .. but in India we've got a lot of people involved [unclear] .. most people who want to make an honest penny can usually do so ... inaudible ... well I'm afraid that my, ah, shall I say my scepticism about human nature is such as you may be surprised huh mm.

_____ : Another thing are you talking about ... people become like their philosophy, the Russian revolution for instance.

S: That's quite true, I agree, ah, this is why you know ah ... I thought this very carefully and this is why I won't go into details but our whole structure, our constitution, our organisational structure, is such that no one within the movement can have any sort of influence unless they've gone through genuine spiritual training and are genuinely spiritually committed, huh, because I saw you know in India I saw in England also that the ordinary type of political association, even Buddhist Society is such that anybody could join if they pay a subscription, or stand for election to a committee ... be elected as a chairman or secretary then as it were have others in their hands and then they ... could as they wish but our system is such our organisation is such that that cannot happen, this is why so far we haven't had any ... to trouble huh. Though people are very, very aware of that sort of possibility.

_____ : You mention spiritual training, what would you say are the ways the spiritually trained person would live their life.

S: Ah, that's quite a question, isn't it. Well, they would have developed they would have grown they will have enjoyed that, huh ah, it was interesting, that, ah, the word sacrifice as the word is used or mentioned because you know people do have quite strange ideas in the West also in New Zealand here about the spiritual life and they don't realise that ah the progress of each individual self development is very, very rewarding so to speak to use that term itself huh it's very very enjoyable so a spiritually trained person will be having a sort of ... (cough) ... he enjoys life, he enjoys his work, he enjoys his contact with other people, it's positive, it's fruitful, productive and creative and he sees the people with whom he is in contact becoming more positive, more and more meaning in life they are getting more and more out of it, this is the experience of the trained person, and it just goes on increasing and increasing.

_____ : The Buddha speaks of final enlightenment, the final peace, at that point does the person stop progressing, does he reach the stage from which he can go no further?

S: Well, here one begins to reach the limitations of human thinking, huh, I sometimes compare that sort of so called fixed point of enlightenment as a sort of point on the horizon, you know over which a ship disappears, you can't see beyond, huh, it's as though to you watching that point on the horizon as though the ship had gone over it into infinity, into nothingness so that so-called fixed point of enlightenment is the point beyond which even your most refined conceptualisation cannot follow but there's no reason why it should not continue that process of development and higher and higher levels of enlightenment even though ah your human mind in your ordinary rational thinking is such that you cannot conceive really the process or a path without a fixed and final goal, yeah.

_____ : So then why does he speak of the final enlightenment?

S: Well, he doesn't actually. Final is an English word, he doesn't actually speak of that in fact. Here

and there the Buddha reflects indirectly that the process goes on and on and on. Ah, to think of it as having a termination is just to be misled by human thought forms huh, even to imagine it sort of think of it as going on indefinitely is much the same sort of thing, whereas at least we can say that to imagine it literally as coming to a full stop huh is just being misled by the limitations of our own thinking.

_____ : So enlightenment is not something fixed, we can grab hold of.

S: No. This is what the Zen people say. I suppose very relatively speaking enlightenment is a sort of fixed state yeh, suppose just for the sake of argument. But circumstances change, yeah, you will meet by different needs and different demands of different people that will call forth as it were a fresh aspect of enlightenment experience. In that way at least your experience will be changing all the time at least it will be constantly enriching itself, but one can go even further than that because as your experience constantly enriches itself more and more it will build up onto even more and more refined levels so one can't really think in terms of a full stop, a state in which you set it up here am I enlightened, I am perfect. Perfection doesn't consist in the achievement of a sort of fixed state and operating from that in a rigid sort of way perfection involves a constant very flexible adaptation in changing circumstances in the light of a principle that remains constant and into which you're penetrating ever more and more deeply.

_____ : And what's the principle?

S: Mmm?

_____ : What is the principle that remains constant?

S: Well, you can call it the Dharma, you can call it the principle of creativity, you can call it anything you like, you can call it Bodhicitta.

_____ : Are you saying it is possible to have a fixed goal now?

S: Yes, you see human thinking as such we have to think in terms of fixed goal, huh, at least provisionally yea, for instance, it's like when you're you know when you're studying, when you're being educated your fixed goal may be to get your Ph.D, mm, you think just in terms of that Ph.D because you can't see beyond that, but once you've got it you see further avenues of research opening up the whole subject has just begun to get interesting now yeh, but you couldn't afford to think about that at the earlier levels when you're just fixing your sights on simply getting your Ph.D or whatever it was.

_____ : So that means your goal will be constantly changing.

S: Yes, so it's better to think you know more abstractly in those sort of terms even though you have provisional fixed goals.

_____ : The Christian doctrine says give and you shall receive thricefold, well, a lot of people in the churches they donate money you know in their and they to seek God's grace which I don't believe in that at all ...

S: Well, it would be better just to say give because ...

_____ : ... That's enough

S: ... There's no need to think of the question of reward, ... somebody might say religion is not shopkeeping ...

_____ : ... that's right it's more and more commercial ... [unclear] Oh God ...

S: It's not that the best possible investment ... [Laughter] ... it's not that ... [unclear] ... [Laughter] ... to illustrate yeh ...

_____ : Your sentiment is excellent but how do you fit it in with actual living you say give, well alright you give everything you've got ... How do you give that ...

_____ : ... It's simple ...

S: I'd put it a different way, it's not so much a question of fitting that in with ordinary everyday living, it's fitting ordinary everyday living in with that. Yeh, you see now let me just give you an example. I've mentioned these co-ops ah, the co-ops have got various workers, the workers also own the co-ops, you're probably familiar with that yeh, so what do they do; ah, we have these co-ops for three reasons. First of all people with a common ideal they enjoy working together, it's pretty awful working with people who don't share your ideals if you've got spiritual ideals, so they enjoy working together they encourage one another by working together. Two they earn a living but they take on the co-ops only for what they actually need for a very simple lifestyle, yeah, and the rest they give back to the centre to which they are connected and yeh, out of that money they various activities are financed so that you don't have to ask the public for donations, yeh, so in this way they function within a sort of self-contained system, they take what they use but they give as much as they possibly can, so this is how people are actually working in London and elsewhere within our movement huh even within you know the present profit motivated society. You can do this, you can carve out this sort of niche. And we want to make this niche bigger and bigger, yeah, it can be done, huh.

_____ : So would you say that the Sangha is not just important for spiritual strength but as a sort of alternate life?

S: I think if you want a sort of alternate life huh you can't really have it without some sort of spiritual foundation. Now I've seen all sorts of experiments, you know, in communes and all that sort of thing but they don't usually last very long, they want some kind of spiritual foundation and ideal. Those which last are those which have some sort of foundation and you know where all the people in that particular commune is committed to the same ideals, huh, this really 'binds' them together to use that term, in inverted commas, in a way in which it seems nothing else can do and that's the basis, that is what make the alternate lifestyle or whatever you like to call it successful but it is though it can't stand on its own two feet.

_____ : But then someone who wanted to become a hermit and just do everything by himself could still get to the same place.

S: There are hermits and there are hermits ah I've met hermits some of them are very strange people. Ah, I don't know, I, yes ah, for someone living completely by himself this could go quite a long way but I think that if he hadn't ever had in his life that sort of contact with other human beings on that sort of basis there'd be something one-sided in his development even as a human being or on that sort of level ...

_____ : Like meaning that he's had less challenges?

S: Yes, you could put it that way, less challenges and maybe the whole aspect of positive emotion would be less developed and that's an important part of human spiritual development.

_____ : What do you mean by positive emotion there?

S: Ah ... this is quite a point, it's quite simple actually but before I answer that just let me tidy up this question, you know in our own movement we emphasise both being together with other people yeh and also being on your own though we have talked about community and you mentioned the word Sangha. But you can't really be with other people unless you're really an individual because usually why we are with other people why do we seek out other people, is because of a need, usually it's a quite subjective not to say neurotic need, we can't really be with other people because in a sense in a subtle sense we are using people all the time there's no sort of free spontaneous interplay between us we are trying to grab them for some purpose or another they're trying to grab us and we get in each others way and that way there's confusion and misunderstanding on so many levels. So you can't really relate to people unless you're an individual to begin with. So we emphasise, yes, relating to people and we also emphasise being on your own, so the people who live in communities relating to each other on the basis of their common spiritual ideals they also go away from time to time for what we call a solitary retreat. They'll go away because in England this is not all that easy because there are not many solitary places, you have to go out into the Highlands of Scotland or some island, but anyway they may actually find some corner all by themselves they take with them a supply of food and they stay a month is a common period though people have been away for six months they stay all by themselves, they meditate they reflect, they study their own reactions to being on their own away from other people and we find that this strengthens their individuality they become more self reliant more truly independent and then they go back into their community and on the basis of that independence and self reliance they are able to function much more positively with other people, do you see what I mean so we encourage a sort of balance of community life, spiritual life on the one hand and solitary retreat on the other. Community life tends to be the rule. People don't spend as much time in solitary retreat as they do living in the communities. But the time will come when there are people I hope there will be people who spend at least maybe as much time on solitary retreat as they do in the spiritual community. But in any case you have to balance these two things and you must carefully distinguish between getting inspiration from other people, other individuals, and living by a spiritual community. Distinguish that from just being a member of a group, of a herd in fact, and just getting security from the warmth of the group. You see what I mean? So this brings us to this question of positive emotion, so this is a term which I use. I would have thought it was clear but perhaps I have been using it for so long that I have forgotten that it isn't so evident huh. It's very difficult to speak in terms of positive emotion without using words which are sure to misunderstand. Supposing I said that love is a positive emotion and that you know one of the things you must cultivate if you want to be emotionally positive is love you are almost certain to misunderstand me, huh, because you've got your own ideas and own experience about love, probably most of you have and it probably doesn't tell you what I mean when I speak of love in the context of positive emotion it corresponds to what we speak of in Pali as metta, you know this universal friendliness that we try to cultivate in the meditation when we do the metta bhavana, I expect most of you are familiar with that huh so this is a positive emotion, this is a sort of positive feeling of goodwill towards other people. Now the English word goodwill is very lukewarm, it doesn't really convey much, but metta or maitri in Sanskrit is very much stronger. It's a very sort of powerful feeling which you actually feel towards other people and which can sort of carry you out of yourself, but it isn't sort of sticky if you know what I mean. It isn't connected with personal attachment or emotional dependence. It's a

sort of impersonal feeling even though at the same time it's intensely personal. You really do wish well towards others, you really do want them to be happy and you'll do everything you can to make them happy quite selflessly but of course you do also feel that metta towards yourself, in Buddhism you have to feel it towards yourself and be on friendly terms with yourself, feel goodwill towards yourself because you are also an individual, you're also a human being and there's the positive emotion of what we call sympathetic joy that means you can rejoice in the happiness of others without any sort of jealousy or anything quite dispassionately (*unclear*) it's a very powerful emotion and then compassion, a feeling of pity but not as it were on a superior level, of genuine fellow feeling for those who suffer and then peace of mind, faith, all these are positive emotions. So this is what we mean by positive emotion but I mean I realise I am using words which are using common parlance which usually bear different meanings. It's not easy to put across what one means by positive emotion unless someone has got a basis for understanding in the practice of something like metta bhavana or some experience of meditation, positive emotion is comparatively rare in the world, huh.

_____ : Bhante, what is Right Livelihood, you know job, you know ...

S: Well, one can give a brief definition and then a few examples. Right Livelihood is usually defined as that mode of livelihood which does no harm to other living beings and which is conducive to your own spiritual development or at least doesn't get in the way of it. It's comparatively easy to find negative examples, for instance work as a slaughter house man, that that springs to mind. The Buddhist texts traditionally mention the manufacture of weapons of war, poisons which are going to be used for taking human life, and they go on they mention these sort of things. These days society is so complex it is sometimes quite difficult to decide whether a particular way of earning your living is in accordance with Right Livelihood or not but you just have to do the best you can as honestly as you can and through your way of life through your way of supporting yourself economically do as little harm to other living beings, to the environment and so on and also be involved in a way of earning your living which is not detrimental to you as a developing human being. These are the criteria which we have to apply ourselves to our own lives as sensibly and sincerely as we can. I don't know what the situation is like in New Zealand whether it is difficult to practise Right Livelihood here I suppose it must be for a lot of people.

_____ : I think what you are referring to is the unintentional pollution like a dangerous pesticides and things like this where you know in the end sort of reflect on human being.

S: It also involves not just good intention but a certain amount of intelligence, because sometimes you have the best of intentions to do something which is harmful to other people or even to yourself. Buddhism recognises that it's very, very difficult if not ... so you should do as little as you possibly can (**tape fault**)

_____ : It's pretty hard to do it ... Some people got their own ideas you try to work with them ... you got your own centre your mind one way and you have to break away from this idea that you have to make it possible to work with the other people you see.

S: Yes, you know in any work that one does one must be aware of other people, even other forms of life and their needs ... and also be mindful and aware of one's own true interests huh ...

_____ : By helping others you're helping yourself so to speak.

S: Well, no, I say it's more likely to be you're unaware of others, huh, you can't really separate

helping yourself from helping others at least helping others though you mustn't use others in that way but helping others spontaneously and naturally out of your own good feeling will certainly help you if you think in those sort of terms huh.

_____ : Are there many young people being brought up in these communities?

S: No, not at the moment ...

_____ : I was thinking how much easier it would be for them to find ... ? ... being brought up in that atmosphere without such without conditioning ...

S: Here of course you've raised a very important point, I hope I'm not going to put my foot too much into it or offend to many people when I say that we don't encourage the nuclear family, you know what I mean by nuclear family, mother, father and one and a half children and a dog yeah laughter ... a family, yeah,

_____ : I wasn't thinking of the nuclear family I was thinking of one big family in a community and those children being brought up with those ideas without the false conditioning that most of us have to throw off ... those children are brought up more in a pure atmosphere ...

S: Well, we do encourage the what we call the extended family rather than the nuclear family. In India you find this anyway you know I mentioned that I was in India recently ah we have quite a lot of friends and Mitras there you know, people who are involved with our movement and then there well practically all, 99.99% of them are married with families huh and most of them have got quite large families, huh and there's one girl coming along to our meetings who is a mitra huh goes to mitra study groups who is 25 by some miracle she wasn't married because in India they usually marry the girls off very quickly and she had lost her parents and lived with her aunt and uncle and 25 of them lived in one small room and from the description I gather it was not even half the size of this room and she slept at night on a shelf rather like this mantelpiece. So this is how lots of people live in India they've got these extended families huh there's lots of children, there's lots of brothers and sisters, there's lots of cousins, aunts, uncles and they all live together if not in the same building then in the same sort of complex or they're an economic unit very often and you find the children grow up so happy and healthy and I noticed on this visit to India you know staying with these people you know they're all quite poor people that after twelve or thirteen years in England I noted they were emotionally more positive, yeah, mm, they were more happy more cheerful, more friendly, more emotionally open, more emotionally interesting.

_____ : There is a point in connection with that, I was in Africa and it came home to me two approaches to life, one's your nice big happy family which seems quite good ... ? ... with people blending, fitting very well together, very happy and the European way which is driving towards something you know I feel almost I feel resentment against ... [*unclear*] ... as I explain these words I often feel you say give to other people, don't harm other people but I sometimes feel that in order to be me I have to cut off contact I could be with that person for an hour to two hours, could talk and talk and talk etc. I could give but there's no time for me.

S: Ah, this comes back to what I said earlier on. There must be a balance. I tell you there is an episode in the life of the Buddha which struck me very, very much when I read it, huh, you see especially since I was in India at the time and what is the Indian idea of a holy man, yeh, a holy man is someone who's got complete patience, yes, who only thinks of other people, yeh, who never thinks of himself, yeh, who never loses his temper, never gets tired, never gets bored huh ... [*Laughter*] ...

and puts up with absolutely everything and people come and ask him all sorts of foolish questions, waste his time, he doesn't mind in the least, he's above all that you see even if he isn't happy he puts up with it you see ... [Laughter] that's his job you see but OK in the Buddhist Pali texts is a passage where it describes the Buddha, and the Pali texts let me explain are considered the most reliable, so it said that for several months, huh, the Buddha had been visited and questioned by princes and merchants and Brahmins, priests and old people and young people and then it said the enlightened one annoyed and disgusted ... [Laughter] ... without telling anybody went off into the jungle for three months all by himself ... [Laughter] ... didn't speak to a soul. So this is a real eye opener to me because at this time, this was quite a few years ago, I was trying to be a real holy man just like I was supposed to be, then it came to me, even an enlightened person has his rights, yeah, so even the Buddha felt the need so to speak at that sort of level of a bit of time to himself and to be away from everybody and not have to answer questions and deal with people, not to speak of others, so I think we need not feel any sort of shame over this, you just have to work out a balance huh and if you're really with people in a resentful sort of way and you really want to be by yourself that's not going to do others any good, so be with others as long as you can, as long as you can bear, when you can't bear them any more go away, it's better for you and it's better for them ... [Laughter] ... This is common sense but don't remain with them unless you can't possibly help it, unless it's a very crucial situation, a situation of life and death, when you've really had enough, huh, and that is the way for you to develop huh if one thinks in terms of development, so don't make a martyr of yourself, don't sacrifice yourself in that sort of way, it doesn't work in the long run, you'll only end up full of resentment and there's nothing holy about that right if it is your aim to be a holy man I don't know.

_____ : These days it seems hard to think of going away anywhere, you look at the countryside divided up into fences, you go down to the beach, no camping, no fires, no staying overnight signs everywhere and you think of getting away from it all but you ...

S: Well, here in New Zealand you ... in New Zealand you really are fortunate huh all these wide open spaces yeh ... in England, in England ... but it's not impossible, that's the point I'm making, even in England people do it there are islands in the inner and outer Hebrides, people go there, there's plenty of places in the Highlands ... it can be done ... there are other parts of the world, I mean, last year I was in Sweden, the greater part of Sweden is uninhabited ...

_____ : There was so much space in England and so much population, I couldn't get over that the open spaces but they guard it very jealously don't they, wide open space ...

S: Well, they'd need to, but you can get away, there are bits of forest, huh, and odd nooks and corners in England. We ourselves in the movement in the FWBO, we're sort of accumulating various isolated caravans and isolated patches of ground here and there, we've got four or five of them now and people can go away for a week, or two weeks, a month or three months to these places and have a solitary retreat, there's one on a mountain in Wales, up the mountain a little caravan perched up there. In New Zealand it's even easier I imagine unless I have illusions on the subject huh.

_____ : ...[unclear] ... say in Hamner Hamner springs you can go up the mountains all day ... and you still have contact with people all the time, you can't isolate yourself without having contact with other people but occasionally people come ...

S: In England well at least in Scotland or maybe in England say the Yorkshire moors you can get really away and it's highly unlikely that anyone will possibly come ... this why people sort of lay out a supply of food, you know, and a bit of fuel so they don't even have to go to the nearest shop.

_____ : A lot of people who appear to be undergoing psychopathological disorders describe these events and experiences in a religious nexus can you give me any criteria on for distinguishing religious experiences such as a peak experience delusion believing that I was experiencing these things ...

S: Well, the criterion is how it works out in actual practice in your life, huh, you know if it is a genuine to use the term peak experience you will as a human being become more integrated more and more able to get on with other people more skilful in everything that you do more aware, more mindful, more responsible, ah, this will be the effect that it produces, huh, so if you've sort of been disorganised and disrupted and become very negative, well one can suspect it's something else even here you have to be quite careful because sometimes even a genuine religious experience comes to you unprepared and sometimes it does it can have quite a shattering effect you may need time to get over that and adjust to the experience and integrate it so that is to be distinguished and sometimes that's not easy to distinguish, that is to be distinguished from the pathological experience.

_____ : One description by Damian Schreinberg was ... at the turn of the century was a brilliant man, he was psychotic, he described the experience as a process of soul murder which corresponds remarkably with Griffiths' description of Zen as a process of mind murder. I wondered if you could comment on the commonalities which are obvious.

S: I don't really like the violent expression murder. I really am a bit suspicious. I don't think a term like that can adequately describe the genuine spiritual process, it's a bit like sacrifice and the cutting off great bleeding lumps of self you know, murder is a very strong word huh and I think it has all sorts of overtones which I don't think pertain to as I said process of spiritual development.

_____ : Excuse me, there are two questions. One is a smart comment I want to make which is about your being negative, if you doing something negative, well, you realise ... what about Jesus Christ giving money merchants a good kick up the arse ...

S: I don't defend the behaviour even of Jesus Christ ... (comments) ... well, you see Christians have been troubled by this one and they say it was righteous indignation etc, etc. Well we, we know so little about the life of Jesus Christ actually this is one of the things I have gone into and the whole personality sort of disintegrates the more closely you look into it, but even if he did that you know on the face of it it would seem to be the result of a sort of outburst of temper and therefore not characteristic of a spiritual person I'd just say that straightforwardly I mean I have no sort of mandate for Jesus Christ.

_____ : That's the best thing. Secondly you sound very like, ah, if something suits your development then take it up ah and it seems to me possible that whatever our religion is ah our concepts of God are etc. are just inventions and what we really are is just an animal natural part of things which is what we are fact, and we're on this planet, we die on this planet, we decay and get eaten by worms etc, and we've got this interval we might as well just make our own rules we given the equipment, we make our own rules we make our own rules do you reckon that's a great idea, do you reckon that's Buddhist because some ...

S: I didn't catch that word ... we make our own rules. That's why you always do anyway ...
[Laughter] ... whether you admit it or not, people do it in a very roundabout way all you know God says this and God says that but who says God does say that really in the end you set up your own rules but you may not care to recognise it, you may not want that responsibility so you make out somebody else has laid down the rules and then you take it from yourself behind your own back ...

_____ : You've become a Christian or you've become a materialist or you've become a Buddhist and a Buddhist is nice and he says you've gotta get rid of all your negativity but what say you're a negative person anyway and you get a kick out of being negative ... (*much laughter*) ...

S: ... [*Laughter*] ... do you really think so. I rather doubt this ah ...

_____ : Well, there are aggressive ... human beings and that wasn't ...

S: Aggressiveness is not negative in the strict sense. Aggressiveness, an ordinary component ah of the involvement of normal healthy the individual surely. Yeah, aggression is not necessarily a dirty word, it's a sort of drive that you have even the obstacles you know smashing drive you know which rightly can conduce to your own development and that of other people's. I wouldn't describe aggressiveness as negative, not necessarily.

_____ : You would have to be aggressive to get goal what you are aiming for got to be aggressive but you cannot be ah like ah killing a person or something like that ...

S: Yeah, you described a Buddhist as a nice person. I hope a Buddhist is not a nice person if you see what I mean. Yeah, people have this idea about the spiritual life and spiritual people and maybe it is the fault of some of the so-called spiritual people, it's very nice, it's very sort of weak, it's very sort of ...

_____ : ... [*unclear*] .. and there are Buddhist texts that won't even ... is this lacking ...

S: If you go through all the Buddhist texts I think you will find that's there's least as much mention of virya which is energy, strength, vigour, drive as there is as such things as loving kindness at least as many references ...

_____ : OK you've done that now. What about this thing about we're just on this planet make our own rules that's existentialism. How do you view that as a Buddhist?

S: I think that one ought to make one's own rules. As I've said that's what you're doing anyway so you should recognise that and accept responsibility for that. One also has to consider what is a rule. A rule is a sort of rough and ready guideline like the stick that you put beside the plant, watch it grow up. So long as it needs it but rules are not ends in themselves. They're a means to an end, which is your own development which is not sort of inseparable really in the long run from the development of other people because to interact with them as part of your own development even though as part of your own development you need to get away from them sometimes huh.

_____ : Bhante, do think it's possible to have genuine spiritual experiences while under the influence of LSD?

S: From what I've gathered talking to quite a lot of people who have had this you know ah sort of experience I would say it is possible under certain circumstances but I shouldn't be quoted as saying that one LSD gives you spiritual experience or that there's no difference between an LSD experience and a spiritual experience though occasionally you do find the two things together one sparking off the other one can't deny that possibility huh, in the case of meditation of course you find spiritual experience always going with meditation.

_____ : I have a question. Ah you said that finally there's likely to be a conflict between what you say a new society or maybe a more spiritually based society and the sort of corrupt society ah what is the Buddhist view when it comes to violence in this place would a Buddhist be involved or not?

S: Well, you're asking about individuals, every individual trying to evolve according to Buddhism will try to practise non-violence, huh, not just in the sense of abstaining from violence but acting positively and in a helpful way but one cannot lay down the rules for other people, mm you've got to lay down as it were the principle make sure that every individual is imbued with that principle but when it comes to any given situation the individual has his or her own responsibility to decide what he or she will do in those circumstances, mmm, the important thing is that the principle should be understood, assimilated, ah imbued, huh, and that one should practise that sincerely but how you practise it in what circumstances only you can decide, huh, you can't sort of draw up a list to cover all possible contingencies.

_____ : Because in the Buddhist teaching it says that you should not harm other living things, would there be a conflict at this point?

S: Sometimes you do find yourself in a situation where there is conflict then only you can decide you have to take that responsibility. You may decide wrongly, huh, you know but the possibility of a mistake is inseparable from freedom, if you decide wrongly you will suffer, others may suffer too so one should realise that responsibility.

_____ : Seems to me in the Bhagavad Gita when Arjuna was calling up Krishna ah that there was almost a justification of killing because ...

S: Really I don't accept the Bhagavad Gita, it's a reactionary Hindu document ... *[Laughter]* ... but the doctrine is highly questionable. I want to come back to something you touched upon earlier which I didn't deal with which this happy society, this happy group, ah, the big happy family is not the highest ideal of Buddhism. I hardly need remind some of you but it has its place, huh, there's what we call the positive group, it's not a spiritual community but everybody in it is healthy, happy and human, and are not necessarily looking beyond, huh. This is almost a necessary sort of basis for the emergence of a spiritual community, ah, it's very unlikely that anybody will be able to develop as a real individual unless he or she has not passed proved to some extent that healthy happy family so to speak what I mean but it's very dangerous to confuse that happy, healthy family, that big happy family with the spiritual community, the spiritual community is quite a different thing.

_____ : Do you think it's important then for someone to get outside the spiritual community to make sure they're getting the right ...

S: O yes, yes, this is why we encourage people to go on solitary retreat to make sure they're not using the spiritual community as though it just was a great big happy family.

_____ : Not a solitary retreat but just going into you know any community?

S: Well, well, that sounds a bit like sort of what shall I say making things more difficult for yourself than you really need to, you do go about anyway. For instance I sometimes go and stay in London. I live in the community there but I go out frequently. I travel in the Tube and I walk in the streets. You have enough contact with people, there you see what is going on you can see the contrast between that not the spiritual community or even between that and you know the big, happy family. Most

people don't even belong to a big, happy family or to speak of the spiritual community. So in the course of one's ordinary life even if you live in a spiritual community you'll be seeing quite enough of other people huh.

_____ : I was just wondering about how much ...

S: It depends on your degree of strength you know sometimes perhaps just to as it were test oneself go out go into a difficult situation see how much you can stand.

_____ : Well, what about if you had someone that was brought up in like the community in England and how would they go about choosing their religion, you know if they'd never been outside that [unclear]

S: Well, we don't mind people studying as widely as they please, that's up to them.

_____ : What say like if you've been brought up you know within a religion you know and some people might just always stay in that ...

S: We don't suggest that any child should be brought up as a Buddhist yeh, we don't believe in that certainly the child can be brought up within a positive and happy human atmosphere but there's no question of that child being a Buddhist huh ...

_____ : But if you're all Buddhist then ...

S: Doesn't mean that he should be or she should be but I discourage that.

_____ : How wouldn't they be ...

S: Well, in England under the present system they go to the state school there they're taught about Jesus and the rest of it see and they come back you know this happens and you know the children of my friends come back and say "Mummy they told us about Jesus today he didn't have any daddy. God was his daddy, is that true mummy?" ... [Laughter] ... Mother has to explain all about it see and in this way it happens naturally the child asks questions and you answer as honestly as you can and the child comes to some conclusion or in England, you see England is becoming so multiracial the child might come back and say "Today I saw a black man wearing a turban, what is he mummy?" and you say oh he must be a Sikh. "What's a Sikh, mummy?" Oh he follows such and such and such a religion and people. ? ... it comes sort of naturally, yeah, rather than sitting down with the child with a text book on comparative religion. I think this is not the way to do it.

_____ : Are you thinking of having your own school or anything like that?

S: We are yes, but not a Buddhist school in the sense that ah it won't be place where children are specifically taught Buddhism, if they ask about it, yes sure answer their questions ...

_____ : You're defeating your own ends ...

S: Yes, exactly because you want to encourage them to be individuals.

_____ : What sort of school would it be? How would it differ from ah ...

S: To be quite honest I don't know because I haven't really gone into it sufficiently yet. I have a shrewd idea it would be rather different, yes, from the ordinary sort of school but the basic idea will be to create such conditions to give such teaching as to enable the child to grow up a healthy happy individual. Able to accept responsibility for himself.

_____ : It'll be something along the lines of sort of ... schools or.

S: Well, I can't say I really know very much about the style of schools but what I have heard has been very good so possibly there will be something of that sort develop, huh, it's something we have very much in mind but I for one haven't given it any detailed thought but I see it as inevitable sooner or later.

_____ : Is this community people living together or just meeting throughout the week ...

S: Ahh no, the expression community has been used. I must explain that we've got different kinds of community. We regard the movement as a whole as a community, huh, and altogether there's several thousand people involved in it to different degrees huh, but we have also what we call the residential communities where any number of people live together from about five up to nearly forty, huh, they tend to be centred on London and the home counties a few in other parts of Britain and you know we're setting them up elsewhere as well and they're usually linked with co-ops where at least some of the people in the communities also get Right Livelihood to support themselves huh ...

_____ : Handcrafts and that sort of thing huh.

S: Ah no, I think the handicrafts market in England apart from candles, we do have a candle factory, is a bit overworked yeh, no, we've got for instance vegetarian restaurants, we've got two, maybe three of those now, we've got bookshops, we've got house repair and decoration and sort of small building business. We've got a press, we go in more for those sort of things, there's a cushion making and upholstery business which the women run, so in this way we've got about thirty different businesses. There's a garden service. We try to be a bit enterprising. There's the wholefood shops, there's several of those also a wholesaling wholefood and health foods business huh that kind of thing, but altogether about thirty and it's mainly from these businesses that we finance the movement now so we don't have to ask for public support. We prefer to be independent. That seems better.

_____ : The FWBO in New Zealand is a charitable trust. Is that more or less the structure in England.

S: Ah yes. It is the structure in most countries which have that sort of tradition. In Finland for instance where we got quite a you know flourishing movement it is rather different because their laws are completely different, there's a different kind of arrangement there but it works in the same sort of way ... In India we've also set up charitable trusts because there you have the same law basically as in England.

_____ : These co-ops are more or less under the umbrella of the charitable trust.

S: Ah, no, they are all legally under the umbrella to use that term of the registrar of incorporated societies. That is how we set them up in England to get certain exemptions and privileges etc. and so on ... we don't pay tax, we don't pay tax because all the co-ops channel their profit back into the centres and profits are common to those centres so we don't have to pay any tax, so its this quite elaborate sort of system which we've worked out over the years and it works quite well ... ah

nowadays I'm told it's very easy for a co-op to be set up in the name of the FWBO, the registrar of friendly of incorporated societies passes us automatically. Usually they have a thorough investigation but so many have come up you know under this or that FWBO they're so familiar with us and it's all the same sort of basic pattern they just pass it in sort of a few days now where normally it might take several months huh because there's about thirty of these before you get a few more set up while I've been out on tour, yeah, they've all been set up within the last two years, huh, all within the last two years, just over two years.

_____ : It's got a good growth rate has it?

S: It has quite a good growth rate, yes.

_____ : It seems so much of a western person's life is concerned with his livelihood that perhaps it's not surprising.

S: Yes, well, this is something that I thought about very early on in my experience in the west after coming back from India, yeh, and I was giving talks, giving lectures about Buddhism among others, Right Livelihood huh so you know what I first did. I was stressing that people should give up any clearly wrong form of livelihood. There was quite a discussion about that, some interesting differences of opinion emerged and I don't know what you will think of this. I was under the impression when I came from India that ah teaching in schools could be considered Right Livelihood when quite a few teachers coming round to our movement and they strongly disagreed with this. They thought teaching in schools was wrong livelihood, so that was the view they took anyway but what I was stressing in principle was that if you are definitely involved in wrong livelihood give it up, huh, but still we thought in terms of people having full time outside jobs ...

_____ : You ask us to give up our entire economy ...

S: Well, I suppose I am when you put it like that ... but anyway I didn't start, just got into it bit by bit, slipped into it you could say. The next stage was I started suggesting that at least the young and unmarried ones who didn't have family responsibilities could just get part-time jobs which was possible in England and spend the rest of the time meditating, on retreat, working for the movement and so on. Then of course people started being absorbed into the movement on a full time basis, they'd be running retreat centres and so on, editing the newsletter and then of course, we started setting up the co-ops which meant that someone could live virtually his entire life within the movement, huh, which meant that it was a much more intensive growth situation and that he sort of interact with people outside in very, very much more positive sort of manner.

_____ : Don't you think it would be much more important to set yourself up outside a centre so that you get experience ...

S: Oh yes, centres there are many different centres. I don't know the exact number, maybe a dozen in England, about twenty communities altogether and about thirty of these co-ops and yes, the aim is to set up as many as possible in as many different areas, huh, or in contact with one another, all functioning in accordance with the same principles so we have a sort of network of them that gradually gets denser and denser, you see what I mean ...

_____ : Are they all being set up with people like a group of people all thinking the same?

S: Mm, yeah, yeah, ah, we did, we have had sort of experiments, we have had individuals starting up

on their own incentive that has proved to be really too heavy a responsibility. Now we think in terms of three or four or five committed people setting up a centre or a community or a right livelihood project together because it's usually far too much just for one or even two people to do, it's a big responsibility, needs a lot of time, a lot of energy and it's too much just for one person.

_____ : In the Buddha's times someone probably simply just dropped all their conditions and go out and wander in the countryside and it was quite respectable to do that and gain some support you could ask for food and people would probably give it to you. Do you think all this business of having to set up cooperatives having to work away gradually at getting out of this the ties that we have reflects the complexity of our society?

S: Yes and no. I've thought about this quite a lot because as I said I spent twenty years in India, yeh, I've seen the traditional system of the wandering monk living on alms, huh, I followed that system myself for several years ... you might know from reading *'The Thousand Petalled Lotus'*, huh, but I eventually came to the conclusion that from the spiritual point of view this was not a desirable system from the spiritual point of view, not from the economic point of view because I found that if all your material needs are provided the temptation is that you frankly become lazy and you tend to stagnate. I've come to the conclusion that every person needs to work for the sake of their psychological health. When I say work I don't mean work in the ordinary sense in the sense of just wage slavery, yeh, I mean it doesn't in the sense matter what you do whether it's brick laying, farming or painting, but everybody needs work including even in most cases physical work for the sake of their development as an individual. And I've found in some of the Buddhist countries in South East Asia the monk never worked huh I've come to the conclusion that this is bad for him psychologically and spiritually, mmm. Maybe it was alright in the old days but it certainly doesn't work now mmm. So here I adopt the Zen principle, huh 'a day of no working is a day of no eating', huh, ... [Laughter] ... and I've found that this really works and within our movement in England we started emphasising the principle of work there was a general upsurge of energy all round, including in the specifically more spiritual aspects.

_____ : You think the Buddha would have kept his monks on their toes or kept them energetically practising, kept them well ...

S: ... [Laughter] ... Well, apparently he did because he seemed to produce the results also. The Bhikkhu life nowadays in South East Asia is not as adventurous as it used to be, yeh, because it's safe, it's secure and you're provided for. You're looked after. You don't have to do anything and I think that's quite bad in fact. It's almost become a principle that the monk doesn't work in South East Asia. Some monks want to work, would like to work. They feel that way but the lay people don't let them because they think the monks are too holy to work so I don't think this is very healthy, and it doesn't help the individual concerned so therefore you know we emphasise that work is a necessity of the spiritual life rightly considered.

_____ : What about disciplining your material appetites like ah you can't eat too much ...

S: Why do you eat too much. This is neurotic, alright. Why are you neurotic, huh? So one has to try and understand this ...

_____ : Gandhi, for example, got very spiritual by fasting, one of his ways ...

S: I'm not so sure that he got so spiritual by fasting. Sometimes I do fast. Now I don't consider it very important from the spiritual point of view except perhaps as a means of studying oneself and one's

reactions I mean one should be very careful not to attach exaggerated value to these things, but certainly the Buddhist principle is more moderation in eating, you shouldn't be the slave of your appetite. I mean there's nothing wrong in eating, nothing wrong in enjoying your food in a healthy sort of way but if you enjoy your food in a healthy way you will not overeat, yeh. You'll eat like an animal, huh, that doesn't overeat unless it's been brought up with human beings ... [Laughter] ... there's nothing wrong with satisfying your physical needs in a healthy objective sort of way huh ...

_____ : What about as regards sex?

S: Well, the same there but unfortunately sex is mixed up with so many neurotic emotions and sometimes it's very difficult to disentangle they are the problem, the neurotic emotions not the actual physical sex itself which in a healthy person, an emotionally healthy person will adjust itself without any problems, huh, but unfortunately, people are not like that, huh.

_____ : What sort of hours do people put in on these work projects?

S: Well, this depends very much on the circumstances. Sometimes you may need in a way to get things done very quickly so you'll work day and night. It depends also on the individual you see. There are a number of different things which have to play their part in the spiritual life for want of a better term, there's work, meditation, there's study, there's communication with other people. Now you may find that it suits you to try to have a little of all of these everyday, maybe an hour's meditation, two hours work, two hours study, three hours of contact with other people everyday on the other hand your temperament and constitution may be such that you prefer to work hard for a week or two yeh without thinking of much else, but letting everything else take second place then say have a week concentrating on meditation and then go away and spend two or three weeks with your friends. You may prefer to do things in this way but the overall picture must be one of balance. You see what I mean yeah? But exactly how much time you spend working or doing anything else within any given day or week all sorts of variations huh but in the end over say a year or two years period, you should have led a pretty balanced life in all these different respects huh and clearly this calls for much more flexibility than most people can enjoy at present.

_____ : Do you find most people in the group pulling their weight fairly equally?

S: Ahh no, it tends to vary a bit there. Some for various reasons they put in much more than others ah there are others who drag their feet as bit, people are not quite the same, the idea is I mean that eventually everybody should put into the movement as much as they can in every respect and take from it as it is whatever they need...

_____ : Each according to his ability ...

S: Yes and this seems to work quite well as far as we have been able to practise it.

_____ : In relation to meditation I know it's desirable to have a regular daily practice but of course you have good periods and bad periods should you push your meditation through the bad periods?

S: You can keep on sitting, you can keep on trying to concentrate but you can't force yourself to meditate yeah ...

_____ : No, no, I'm using the ...

S: I say it depends on what sort of person you are if you're one of these lazy easy going getting up late in the morning sort of people then you need a bit more discipline so alright force yourself to sit a little bit huh or force yourself to try to concentrate a little bit more. If on the other hand you are one of these overconscientious dutiful people then you needn't bother so much but one sort of general piece of advice it's very important that you enjoy meditation mm so if you find that you've stopped enjoying meditation and you start dreading meditation and are not looking forward to it then is the time to consider your position very carefully. It's best if you then cut down your period of meditation to a very short period which you faithfully observe and you enjoy mm and only lengthen it as your enjoyment of it increases. It's quite dangerous to get into a situation where you don't enjoy your meditation. It's very important that you should enjoy and look forward to it whether it's a very regular one or for a longer period or a shorter period so if necessary don't be so ambitious, cut your meditation period down but faithfully observe that as far as you can. Really enjoy that, that is more important - a short period that you enjoy rather than a long period which won't be meditation anyway which you don't enjoy. If you enjoy your meditation it'll start prolonging itself spontaneously sooner or later because if you're enjoying it you'll want to go on meditating. So sure yes push yourself a bit over little humps and difficulties. Don't sort of pamper yourself, but meditation shouldn't become nothing but a sort of grim sort of driving of oneself. It should never become that.

_____ : Wouldn't you say that the more you enjoy your meditation the less of a challenge it is.

S: The what ...?

_____ : The more you enjoy your meditation the less challenging it is.

S: No, I say it's the other way around, because that's the challenge - to go on to something further and not get stuck in the enjoyment huh because enjoyment is not the last word in meditation, but it's an important part of it.

_____ : What about sitting in dark circumstance around a fire would you call that meditation ...

S: Sitting what?

_____ : If you're sitting watching a fire say or something like that do you actually have to be doing something or maybe with somebody else ...

S: You might sort of get into a highly concentrated state but it's very doubtful whether you'd get any further than that, that's alright as far as it goes but I couldn't really call it meditation.

_____ : Ah if you're meditating should you try and concentrate ...

S: Well you begin with concentration. You can't really meditate unless you're concentrated but what does concentration mean. Concentration doesn't mean forcibly fixating the mind on something, concentration means a gradual unification of one's energies so that they as it were naturally remain on a single point, and it requires quite a bit of practice and skill to get things to such a point so to speak where you know even though you can't just sit and become integrated you have just to coax yourself a bit but you're not actually forcing and you have to also prepare for that. You can't just sort of sit down and make the mind concentrated. You have to remember say at least an hour or two before that you're going to be sitting and concentrating and meditating so that when you do sit all your energies are pulling together, there's no distraction and there's a definite energy. You're not just

dull and blocked, an aware energy which gradually comes together, you've settled down on whatever subject of meditation you have and then you can you can meditate.

_____ : [unclear]

S: Well there are many, there are several hundred in Buddhism. In the FWBO we concentrate to begin with on just a very few like the Mindfulness of Breathing, the Metta bhavana and so on just a few very simple ones which are very effective. One shouldn't be too ambitious one shouldn't be ambitious at all to get hold of some very esoteric difficult practice which nobody else has got, that's a waste of time and it's the wrong way to do it anyway just take up a single meditation, simple concentration exercise.

_____ : [unclear]

S: No, that's much too advanced ... **(changing of the tape - piece missed)** yes pride, the pride can be used in a positive way and a negative way, healthy sort of pride which is justified fine yes in the Vajrayana they even speak of Buddha pride, that I am someone on the Buddhist path that I am even potentially enlightened I will be enlightened one day how can I possibly do something unskilful or evil. You can use your feeling of pride in that sort of way. You see what I mean? You have to be really careful that it doesn't become actual arrogance huh but yes a healthy pride is not a negative emotion. Wrapped around this sort of question is the Christian conception of humility. If humility is a virtue there must be vice, yeah, but humility is not one of the Buddhist virtues, humility means pretending you're less than you really think you are which isn't really a virtue at all it's just hypocrisy ...

_____ : I heard that I can't remember the words but something that through Buddhism you find yourself to lose yourself.

S: You can put that way, you can put it that way.

_____ : Can you explain it a little bit ...

S: Well, what it means is that we're changing or we should be changing all the time, changing in the sense of growing and developing yeah so as you shed as it were the old self which is what happens when we grow you find a new self, you grow onto a higher level a higher mode of being, so you lose yourself and you find yourself and you have to lose yourself in order to find yourself. You can't grow without casting off the old what refers to a previous level of development. There's nothing abstruse or mysterious about it, it's a sort of straightforward as that.

_____ : But that means changing, to find yourself to lose yourself ...

S: You mean putting it the other way around yes, you have to find yourself to lose yourself too and lose yourself to find yourself, it's a reciprocal process you can start from this end or you can start from that end it doesn't really matter.

_____ : But would you say to find yourself to lose yourself then there couldn't be you know any such thing as pride ...

S: Oh you've lost me now. [Laughter]. You could take pride in losing yourself in order to find yourself or you could take pride in your finding yourself to lose yourself. [Laughter] You could take

pride in anything you please to take pride in, some people take pride in their vices, but the question is whether it's a healthy pride or whether it's an unhealthy competitive sort of pride, but pride of itself is not a vice necessarily.

_____ : No, I don't see how you can be proud of losing how you can lose yourself and have pride.

S: OK, well don't think in terms of pride.

_____ : How do you find what is healthy seeing as you're dealing with things that are determined by the individual and not anything beyond or above the individual ...

S: Well, they're determined by the individual in the sense that the individual creates them. You could say that they follow the laws of psychology, the laws of human development huh.

_____ : I don't experience myself as someone who's conditioned by the laws.

S: No, well, you're not conditioned by the laws in the sense that law is something outside you. Laws are simply ways of formulating certain observed regularities in life, that's all, but those regularities are there and we can represent them abstractly as laws but we mustn't think of laws outside of what is actually occurring determining and governing what is happening and that is what they call a reification of concepts.

_____ : And often it's a case of what we think is normal and healthy is in actual fact the reverse ...

S: Ohh, I would say that it is usually so. It's healthy to be angry, it's healthy to lose your temper, it's normal to be selfish, it's right to be selfish etc., etc., so presumably one has to reverse ... when I use the term 'healthy' I use it in much the same sense as use the expression 'positive emotion'.

_____ : Just about ego or whatever about this giving things value I get the feeling about Buddhism last year this story about these chaps who go to Mrarbar caves, do you know them, in India ...

S: Aren't they the caves that Ian Vorster mentions?

_____ : That's exactly what the story I was going to say, ah and that's sometimes the feeling I get when I look into a religion that seems to encompass every option one can bring up in discussion ...

S: Every option?

_____ : Well, you know, I bring up, ah God, I'm disorganised, I wish I could somehow find the thought ... I keep bringing up lines of actions one might follow and you say OK but do it in moderation or whatever or this is right in moderation or that is right in moderation follow your own whim ...

S: Well, now I don't say follow your own whim, oh no, huh, your own responsible insight into the situation ...

_____ : What would you like him to say?

S: I think he would like me to say something he can disagree with. *[Laughter]* That's a healthy sort of ...

_____ : I'm talking to the Marabar caves I say one thing and I get boom, I say another and I get boom ...

S: Well, you'd better start asking the meaning of that boom huh ... *[unclear]* maybe it doesn't mean everything maybe it means just one thing huh yeh *[Laughter]*

_____ : What is the Buddhist way of dealing with negative emotions when they arise?

S: Dealing with?

_____ : Negative emotions ...

S: Well, there are various ways of dealing with them. You can deal with them first of all by cultivating the opposite. Supposing the emotion hatred arises, you can deal with it by cultivating the metta bhavana which means you won't be able to do it on the spot. You must practise say the metta bhavana more regularly so that you can get in touch with that sort of feeling of positive goodwill towards others, huh, then when the emotion of hatred arises in your mind then you invoke that feeling of metta which you have experienced in meditation, and these two being contrary they cannot coexist so as the metta arises the hatred must subside huh. There are other methods. You can for instance think very seriously of what the consequences will be for yourself and others of indulging or continuing to indulge in that negative emotion. There's another method still. You can just look at it and say never mind it'll pass, it's just like a cloud passing the mind, let it go, never mind, don't bother, it's just a little wave of hatred that's arisen, it'll go down. Yeh, so there are methods of this sort. Another effective method is just associating with people who are positive. It's very difficult to be negative, indulge in negative states of mind if you are in the company of people who are positive. Sooner or later they'll sort of coax you out of your negativity, yeh, and you'll become positive yeh, or if you're in an extremely negative state you just won't be able to stay with them, yeh, but hopefully you won't ever be in that sort of state ...

_____ : (unclear audience question)

S: ... sometimes of course you can if you've got a very strong dose of negativity and their positivity is weak they shouldn't be associating with you, yeh, but if you're with people who have got strong positivity when there's several of them they can coax you out of your negativity. So these are just some of the things that one can do more specifically. Ultimately it's your whole way of life that it's going to influence and effect your state of mind whether negative or positive. it's not a question of just a bit of last minute first aid huh that that might work just as first aid but not as a permanent cure.

_____ : I know from experience I know that's true from experience, that you go through a stage where you stand on your own feet and be positive.

_____ : Can you really develop through imitating and looking to others for the direction? Herman Hesse's book Siddhartha this was the major obstacle.

S: I think one has to be careful of imitating in the strict sense, imitating means copying the externals

without catching the spirit, you have to be very careful of that, yeh. It can happen in spiritual life or it can happen in the arts, huh. Imitation is not the same as emulation - you can be inspired by someone's example but you shouldn't imitate them, you can be inspired by them but your particular style way of doing things can be completely different.

_____ : Have you yourself experienced enlightenment?

S: We've been talking about enlightenment as not a static something in which you can settle down mm, so the most that you can ask of anybody is that they are going from one positive or creative state to another. If you ask anybody whether they've gained enlightenment in the sense of settling down roughly into this state then they should say well I hope not [*Laughter*] [*unclear*] because even if one's experience doesn't deepen at least it broadens huh and you know one can speak even more multidimensional than that, huh. It broadens, its deepens it opens up in all sorts of ways all the time yeh I can certainly claim that this is what happens to me and is happening more and more. If you like to regard it as enlightenment you can but I'd rather you didn't huh. [*Laughter*].

_____ : Would you say enlightenment was finding yourself?

S: Traditionally speaking, Buddhism doesn't use that sort of terminology. I think it's probably safer not to use it because when you say finding yourself it suggests something sort of done once and for all and there you are, whereas I've tried to emphasise it is a sort of continuing process which can continue beyond the horizon above thought as it were.

_____ : Could you put it in a few words?

S: Well ... it's ... what can I say, it's the growth from one creative state to another or you become mentally and spiritually, emotionally in every way more and more creative. I think this is the best way of putting it on every possible level, in every possible way or at least in many ways as you can.

_____ : Is there any possibility of being enlightened without knowing it?

S: Well. [*Laughter*] it depends how you define knowledge huh. If you think sort of define knowledge scientifically, sort of stand back, look at yourself and you tell yourself well yes I'm enlightened well no, not knowledge in that sort of way. But the state of creativity is inseparable from awareness yeh, in the sense of being aware of you yes you know that you are enlightened, but not in the sense of standing back from your state and observing it as something sort of separate, huh. What you experience and your knowledge of what you experience are one and the same thing yeh. Not two separate things in that sense. Yes, you can be said in a manner of speaking to know that you're enlightened, huh, but it would be equally true to say that you don't know you're enlightened.

_____ : (inaudible question)

S: It's only a manner of speaking because in a way, you yeh as soon as you know you look at yourself you've changed you've gone a bit further you've become a bit more creative so you're constantly escaping from your own knowledge that's another way of looking at it, huh. Your being in constantly in front of the knowledge of your being but at the same time awareness is part of that being itself huh.

_____ : Don't you find awareness can be quite painful? You go into the park for example you wander in you try to work out that your ...?... is and you just can't get it you know the language ...

but I just find it quite painful ...

S: I wouldn't say that awareness itself can be painful, I think it depends on what you're aware of, and also that the struggle to be aware can be painful, it isn't easy to be aware, it isn't natural to be aware. Most of the time most of us are not aware at all. It's almost like walking on the tips of your toes, it's something you have to keep up with constant effort, and that involves, yes, an element of painfulness until it becomes natural to you ...

_____ : It's I just get a very strong need to ... I was talking about sacrifice before well if I go for an evening and watch TV with my initially ? a natural flow or if go just talk ahh and you just go like that it's quite pleasant quite comfortable as it can be very painful to get outside the machine (*unclear*) that's what I meant when you're talking about ...?... thing, it occurs to me that it might be far more pleasant to live a life fairly snug inside a machine with all your diversions ...

S: Well, you can study yourself and your reactions inside that situation that might throw quite a lot of light on the course of your future development as an individual but you must really be doing that and not sort of idling away your time or just sort of harming yourself out of a sort of self interest this is what sometimes people do.

_____ : It sounds as if enlightenment is a summary of all good things ...

S: I wouldn't use the word 'summary' perhaps, perhaps I would use the word 'culmination'. I don't see enlightenment as something completely foreign to what we are now, yeh, but more in the way of the bringing to fulfilment or bringing to perfection to an unimaginable extent even of seeds which are present in all of us even now huh.

_____ : Is it possible for all of us then to get enlightened you know ...

S: Well, it's possible for everybody to grow and there's no need for you to set any limit on growth yeh.

_____ : Do Hindu scriptures say quite often read they quote enlightenment with the raising of energy ... the spine to the thousand petalled lotus as too

S: Well some teachers take that literally, others do not. One can take it either way as one pleases, but what it really represents is the sort of enhancement of energy, so one of the things that happens as you develop and as you grow is that your energies increase ah your energy in every respect huh and this sort of process is symbolised by the Kundalini as it's called huh or ... ? ... in Buddhism you know going up this median nerve, which may or may not actually be located in the physical body bursting open the different lotuses at different centres with different numbers of petals until it finally reaches the thousand petalled lotus as the top. One would have thought that the symbolism was quite obvious. It's not so much a matter of say looking around in your entrails until you find that lotus physically. You concentrate on the process, you experience this process, and you just in the course of your spiritual life, you express a constant enhancement of energy, yeh. As you grow spiritually you must become more alive, huh, you mustn't become a sort of grey attenuated shadowy sort of figure flitting around. That is not a spiritual person. This is the impression that one is sometimes given. It is not the Buddhist idea anyway. This doesn't mean of course you become grossly extrovertedly hearty and enthusiastic and kiss everybody on the head in your cheerfulness. It doesn't mean that, it's more refined than that but yes, that is one aspect of your spiritual life that your energy is enhanced because most of us live at a very low energy level indeed because most of our energy is blocked for one

reason or another and one of the things that happens in the course of spiritual life symbolised by the Kundalini bursting into the lotus is that different energy blockages become unblocked and all the energy that's locked up so to speak in them is released and that is available to you, to the conscious personality and you become much more alive. If as a result of your spiritual life you don't become more alive something is wrong, mm it doesn't mean you may of course go through the quiet periods or withdrawn periods, I'm not saying you should be extroverted all the time but in the long run your energy does increase and you become more lively and more exuberant. It depends also on your temperament. It can be a quiet energy that quietly radiates or it can be something more exhilarating and more exuberant, but energy must be there. It must be felt to be there.

_____ : In connection with that question why is it so important to have a straight back when you are sitting in meditation considering physical things?

S: Mm, ah, well the physical does react upon the mind. I don't know whether anyone has experienced sort of deep concentration or deep absorption as a result of meditating but what you'll find happens is this. When you become deeply absorbed you quite spontaneously really straighten up. It's as though there's some force inside you just pulling you up gently but firmly in a pleasant sort of way, yeh. So when you're concentrated you are straight. That is when you're sitting cross-legged, huh, so it's sort of to help induce that feeling of absorption you adopt the feeling, the posture, huh, which is the natural expression of that absorption. You see what I mean. In the hope that the physical posture will act on the mind and help to become more absorbed, it's as simple as that huh. So when one is sitting on the floor cross-legged or just sitting a chair like this huh which you can do if you find sitting cross-legged difficult you just sit straight huh. But you will find however straight you are, when you become deeply absorbed you become even straighter, not stiff, not like a ramrod in a military sort of way, but really straight in a relaxed firm sort of way huh.

_____ : Is that anything similar to Kundalini?

S: Well as I've said the Kundalini symbolises this unfoldment of energy and when you become deeply absorbed at the same time yes energy is there but it's a sort of poised energy it's not going out it's not doing anything and it's just poised energy which just sort of you know pulls you up straight huh.

No further transcript found

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