

The Jewel Ornament of Liberation - women's seminar held at Padmaloka May 1982

The Motive and the Working Basis - chapters one and two

Present: Sangharakshita, Dhammadinna, Anjali, Vajrasuri, Vajrapushpa, Jenny Roche, Gay Voller, Glynis Brown, Megha, Debbie Seamer, Annie Fowler, Linda Moody, Rosy Anderson, Marion Monas, Greta Thomas, Rosie Ong, Kay Tremaine, Annie Murphy, Paula Turner, Daphne Luce, Dawn Bouic.

Day 1 Tape 1. Side 1

S: Well, as you know, we're doing the Jewel Ornament of Liberation. I hope we can get through the first two chapters - at least the first one - but hopefully two. Some of you may know that on the last study retreat, we did chapters from the Jewel Ornament mainly those dealing with Metta. But it would be a good thing, perhaps, if we could go back to the beginning and eventually, maybe in the course of several years, we'd get through the whole volume. So we'll go through it, taking it quite steadily, trying to understand thoroughly, everything that Gampopa says, because the text, as you probably know, is quite condensed. It needs quite a bit of going into. So perhaps we could start with someone reading the first section, then we'll just make sure that we understand it.

If you just read that introductory verse of salutation:

Anjali:

"Homage to Saintly Manjusri who was once a Prince!
Having bowed to the Victorious One, his Sons and the sublime experiences,
As well as to the Gurus who are their foundation,
In relying on Milarepa's and Atisa's grace, I write for the benefit of myself and others
This Jewel of the Noble Doctrine which is like the Wish-fulfilling Gem."

S: So this is the preliminary salutation. This is Gampopa saluting his teachers, so to speak, and declaring the purpose with which he is undertaking to write this work. There are a number of notes by Guenther, the translator, some of which are relevant, others perhaps, not quite so relevant. Anyway, let's go into this opening verse: "Homage to saintly Manjusri who was once a Prince."

'Saintly' probably translates the Tibetan equivalent of Ariya. It isn't really saintly. Ariya means someone who has attained the transcendental paths. That is to say, someone who is not simply emotionally positive or psychologically well-developed, or free from psychological problems but someone who has actually [2] come within sight of the transcendental, the unconditioned and has been transformed by that. That is to say, in Hinayana terms, anyone from a stream-entrant onwards, and in Mahayana terms, a Bodhisattva. So, "homage to the saintly Manjusri", Ariya Manjusri, "who was once a Prince". Guenther says here that "the Sanskrit original of this invocation, Manjusri Kumarabhuta, is often translated 'Manjusri the Youth'. This misses the associations the Tibetans have when they hear or read these words by which they understand the story of the Bodhisattva Manjusri who as King Amba vowed to become a Bodhisattva."

I think personally, this is a bit beside the point. Manjusri, as you probably know, or Manjughosa, iconographically, is represented as a sixteen year old youth, as Bodhisattva's usually are. There's a thangka of Manjusri up there, you may notice. - It's interesting to see that iconographically speaking, the figure of Manjusri, somewhat resembles a figure we find in the Pali Canon the figure of Sanat Kumara. Has anyone come across this figure? Or any reference to him? Sanat Kumara. The Brahma Sanat Kumara. He is quite important in the Pali canon. Those of you who've read the Majjhima-Nikaya, may know that there is a sutta called the Maha-Govinda sutta. Anyone familiar with this? No? You're familiar with the Majjhima-Nikaya, the middle length discourses, no? Who's read the Majjhima-Nikaya?

Voices: Bits of it.

S: Bits of it. Ah! There is a copy of it, here I hope, unless somebody's taken it away.

Perhaps we'd better go back to the beginning then. The Pali canon consists of three Nikayas - you're no doubt familiar with that. The Sutta-Pitaka, Vinaya-Pitaka, Abhidharma-Pitaka. Sutta-Pitaka is divided into five Nikayas. The first Nikaya contains the long discourses of the Buddha: the Digha-Nikaya. The second contains the Majjhima-Nikaya, that is to say, discourses of medium length. There's 34 long discourses, 152 medium length discourses.

Then we come on to the Samyutta-Nikaya. Samyutta means 'collected'. In this Nikaya, in which the sections are much shorter, extracts from the previous two Nikayas, as well as material from independent sources, are collected and arranged in accordance with topics. There are little groups of sayings on, say: trees, on devas, on monks, on nuns, on kings and so on. On Mara, on Stream-entry.

Then there's the Anguttara-Nikaya. Here the arrangement is [3] as it were, numerical. You've got a book of sayings on 'one' thing, then on 'two' things, 'three' things - for instance, the three kinds of feeling. Then the 'four' things, right up to, I think it's eleven or twelve things. So these are the first four out of the five Nikayas. Then the fifth Nikaya is miscellaneous. This contains 14 different works including the Dhammapada, the Udana, Sutta Nipata, Jataka and so on; contains some quite old material.

So the Sutta that I mentioned comes from the Majjhima-Nikaya is one of these 152 medium length discourses and it's called the Maha-Govinda Sutta. In this Sutta, a person called Maha Govinda, decides to spend the rainy season in retreat, and practising the, we would call it, the Metta Phavana - Metta Bhavana and Karuna Bhavana. So he spends the whole of the rainy season, immersed in, one might say, deeply meditative states. Immersed in the experience of Metta and Karuna and, at the end of that period, there appears to him, the Brahma, Sanat Kumara - the Brahma, the Eternal Youth. And Maha Govinda puts to the Brahma Sanat Kumara, a question, a very very important question. And he says to him in Pali - if I can remember the exact words - (Pakati Machunon Amatam Brahma-Loka) He says: "How may a mortal attain to the immortal, the undying Brahma-Loka?" And then the Brahma Sanat Kumara gives him a short teaching.

Now this Brahma Sanat Kumara, is sometimes known as Pancasikha. Pancasikha means 'the of the five crests' and you see, in the case of Manjusri there are five crests. It would seem that, iconographically speaking, the figure of the Manjusri Bodhisattva is, I won't say based on or derived from - but has something in common with the figure of the Brahma Sanat Kumara.

Because after all, one has to explain or represent the unknown in terms of the known. So it would seem to me that this question of Manjusri, being a Kumara the word for Kumara is sometimes 'prince', some times 'youth' . The fact of his being described as Kumara, doesn't go back just to some story about him becoming a prince, but goes back to the figure of Bodhisattva Sanat Kumara - the Eternal Youth. Do you see what I mean? Bodhisattvas are usually represented in this form. And don't forget that Manjusri is the Archetypal Bodhisattva.

Not because it represents age in the ordinary mundane sense but youth represents something which transcends time. Something which doesn't really refer to past, present or future. The eternal. It is symbolized by the timeless, the ever young, the ever youthful.

[4]

So one shouldn't here think in terms of youth in the literal sense, so much as of that which transcends time; if you want to put the timeless or even the eternal into a human form, well, it would be a young human form - at least this is what the Indian Buddhists thought - rather than an aged human form - as perhaps the Christians in the West tended to think. So this Manjusri, who is Kumarabhuta, who assumes the form of a youth, one may say, rather than who was once a prince. Who is, as it were, eternal wisdom appearing [in] the form of an eternally youthful being. If you read Jung at all, he's got quite a lot to say about the 'Puer Eternus' - the 'eternal youth'. Is anyone familiar with this material? He's got all sorts of, as it were, archetypal associations and resonances. So, "homage to saintly Manjusri, who was once a Prince"

Dhammadinna: Is the figure of Sanat Kumara, is that a Buddhist figure or is that pre-Buddhist?

S: Well, Sanat Kumara appears in the Pali Canon. One could say that, yes, it's a pre-Buddhist figure, but also one has to bear in mind that, the Buddha himself, when he was teaching, didn't have a ready-made set of Buddhist terms to hand. He used the terms that were then current - the terms that were then available. And one might even say that early Buddhists saw things in contemporary terms. They thought in terms of Brahmas, and Devas. Or one might even say, they experienced things in those terms. Or they had certain experiences to which they affixed the terms that were then current. Do you see what I mean?

Perhaps I ought to say a few words about the sort of - what shall I say? - cosmological background. The cosmological background in the Buddha's day was rather different from what it is nowadays, in the West especially. The early Buddhists, like their fellow Indians thought in terms of a sort of stratified universe. Do you know what I mean by that? A universe of levels and layers. And it was principally sub-divided into the Kama-Loka, the Rupa-Loka and the Arupa-Loka.

So the Kama-loka contained at the very bottom, the world of or the spheres of suffering: the hells or purgatories; then there was the sphere of, or the world or plane of the Hungry Ghosts, the Pretas; then the animals; then human beings; then asuras; then devas - that is to say, the lower devas who come within the Kamaloka: the realm of sensuous desire or sensuous experience. Then you had the Rupa-Loka devas, one might say the devas of sort of [5] archetypal form. And then above those the Arupa-Loka devas - devas made of pure light, so to speak. And they were, roughly speaking, identical with the Brahmas. Do you see what I mean?

So the Brahma Sanat Kumara, was one of the most prominent of these. And then, it seems that when, in Mahayana Buddhism, they developed the idea, though it was much more than an idea, of the Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva externally or iconographically took on the features of the Brahmas, especially of Brahma Sanat Kumara and especially Manjusri - took on the form so to speak, of Brahma Sanat Kumara, or appeared in, or was represented in that particular form.

Rosy A: Who was it that Sanat Kumara appeared to?

S: Maha Govinda. The Sutta is called the Maha Govinda Sutta. If you look it up - I forget the number...

Rosie O: And Sanat Kumara gave teachings that the Buddha (repeated)

S: Yes, oh yes. The teaching related to - what shall I say - to the elimination of the sense of self. He gave a quite interesting teaching. Maybe you should read the whole Sutta. (Pause) Now why do you think that Gampopa pays homage especially to Manjusri? In the first line of this salutation - why Manjusri?

Dhammadinna: He's the Bodhisattva of exposition of the Dharma.

S: He's primarily the Bodhisattva of wisdom, the Bodhisattva of eloquence, of knowledge, of understanding of the scriptures and therefore of exposition. But looking at it, as it were, one might even say more psychologically, why do you think homage is paid to Manjusri? (Pause) Well Gampopa is aware that he's embarking on quite a difficult task - he's writing a book on the Jewel Ornament of Liberation. And it isn't going to be easy to do justice to the subject. So he wants to call up, so to speak, within himself, all his reserves of understanding and wisdom. He wants to evoke them. So he does this by paying homage to Ariya Manjusri, who appears in the form of an eternal youth.

Anjali: Bhante, in the note where it says, "Manjusri Kumarabhuta" doesn't 'Bhuta' mean 'ghost'?

S: Yes, it does also mean 'ghost' but that's a quite different meaning.

Anjali: What does it mean here?

S: Well, as he says, it means 'become'. It's a form of the verb [6] verb 'to be'. So one has become, either become a Prince, according to Guenther, or become the youth - the eternal youth -. That is to say, appearing in the form of the 'eternal youth'. (Pause)

Then, "having bowed to the Victorious One, his Sons and the sublime experiences". Who is the Victorious One?

Voices: The Buddha.

S: The Buddha. What's the Sanskrit then? The Buddha as Victor, or Conqueror ...

Voice: Jina?

S: Jina. Yes. So, "having bowed to the Victorious One," - the Buddha, the Jina - "His Sons". Who are his sons?

Voice: The Bodhisattvas?

S: The Bodhisattvas. And "the sublime experiences". Now, what does one mean by "the sublime experiences"? (Pause)

Annie F: Isn't it the Dhyanas he's talking about?

S: Dhyanas? No. Actually it's more than that. It's the series of transcendental experiences that make up the transcendental path; which also make up the Dharma. Sometimes the question is raised, "well, what do we actually mean by the Dharma?" Dharma can be translated as 'teaching', it can be translated as 'truth'; it can be translated as 'doctrine', it can be translated as 'law'. But essentially Dhamma means a sequence, a series of transcendental states. You remember the teaching about the positive nidanas? You're familiar with that, aren't you? The 12 positive nidanas. And then especially, there is that part of the series of positive nidanas from Knowledge and Vision of Things as they Really Are - onwards. That is the strictly transcendental series, or the transcendental part of that series.

So, it's that series, of, in the strict sense, transcendental states arising - the subsequent one in dependence on the preceding one, continuing indefinitely. It is that which really, in principle, constitutes the Dharma. And following the Dharma, means, becoming one with, so to speak, that sequence, that series of transcendental nidanas. So these are "the Sublime Experiences" that are being referred to. "As well as to the Gurus who are their foundation." Now what does that mean? Foundation of what?

Dhammadinna: Their practice?

S: "Their foundation" - it clearly refers to, you know, what has come before. It could be that it is, you know, Manjusri himself. "The Victorious One, his Sons and the sublime experiences". It could be [7] that the Gurus are regarded as the foundation of all of them. Grammatically, it bears that interpretation, but it could also be - and this is more likely - that the Gurus are the foundation of the sublime experiences. So, what would that mean? - by saying that the Gurus are the foundation of the sublime experiences, of the experiences of the transcendental, or those experiences which constitute the nidanas of the transcendental path?

Vajrasuri: The Gurus are the teachers.

S: The Gurus are the teachers...

Vajrasuri: ... pass on the basic ...

S: Not of course, that they pass on anything in the literal sense, but, they help create the conditions in dependence upon which one may have that sort of experience. They help create the conditions by teaching, as well as in other more direct ways.

Then he mentions individual teachers: "In relying on Milarepa's and Atisa's grace, I write for the benefit of myself and others". So why does he mention especially Milarepa and Atisa?

Who are Milarepa and Atisa? Perhaps that should be clarified first.

Milarepa, no doubt, you are quite familiar with. Who is Milarepa?

Voice: It's actually his teacher.

S: Milarepa is his own teacher, yes. And which tradition does Milarepa belong to?

Voice: Kagyupa.

S: The Kagyupa tradition, which goes back to Tilopa and Naropa, the great Indian Gurus. Who is Atisa?

Voice: Wasn't Atisa - didn't he take Buddhism to Tibet?

S: Yes, he took Buddhism to Tibet. He wasn't the first to do so. He came about 300 years after Padmasambhava and Shantarakshita, at a time of decline. He was a great teacher, a great scholar and yogi from Nalanda University. And he went to Tibet; he remained there for a number of years. And the tradition which he started, or the school of which he became the founder was the Kadampa school. Do you know anything about that? Kadampa means the school of transmitted precepts. The Gelugpa school of Tsongkhapa - you've heard about that no doubt is, in a sense, a continuation of the Kadampa school of Atisa.

Atisa stressed the importance of the observing of the precepts, especially the ten precepts - the ten Kusala-Dharmas. He stressed [8] very much, the development of the Bodhicitta. And in his personal practice, he was very devoted to the meditation and Mantra recitation of Tara. That was an important practice he transmitted. So Atisa represents, one might say, the more scholarly, more purely Mahayana tradition. Whereas Milarepa represents the more yogic, more Tantric tradition. Do you see what I mean?

So Gampopa was the inheritor, so to speak, of both these traditions. In his own teaching, in his own writing, he combined these two. So he salutes Milarepa and Atisa, so to speak, to indicate his two main sources of inspiration. And to indicate that the teachings contained in this work are going to draw upon both these traditions the Kadampa and the Kagyupa.

But, "in relying on Milarepa's and Atisa's grace, I write for the benefit of myself and others, this jewel of the noble doctrine which is like the Wish-fulfilling Gem." So he writes for the benefit of himself and others. It's not, so to speak, that he doesn't need any help himself any more. He's writing it in the first place, for his own benefit, to clarify his own thoughts, to remind himself of the teaching. And also for the benefit of others. And what he writes is "this jewel of the noble doctrine which is like the Wish-fulfilling Gem".

So 'Wish-fulfilling Gem' could refer to the work itself or to the doctrine. Perhaps it doesn't really matter which it refers to. Perhaps it refers to both. You know about the Wish-fulfilling Gem, the Chintamani? Have you heard of this? It's a sort of mythological, what sometimes is called a mythologem. That isn't meant as a pun a mythologem - it's a sort of mythological theme, one might say, or motif. You've got a number of these sort of things in Indian mythology. You've got the Wish-fulfilling Cow, and you've got the Wish-fulfilling Tree; you've got the Wish-fulfilling Gem. It's like Aladdin's Lamp. What do you think it means,

when it say the doctrine or a work embodying the doctrine, is like the Wish-fulfilling Gem?
What does this really mean?

Voices: Benefits everybody.

S: Benefits everybody, yes. What else do you think?

Voice: Gives you everything you need.

S: Gives you everything you need.

Voice: ... or want.

S: This is quite a point when you consider that the Dharma gives you everything that you need or rather that the Dharma fulfils all [9] your needs. But do you really think this is true? Do you really find this or do you find that you have other needs apart from the Dharma? Or do you find that the Dharma is just one among a number of different needs? (Laughter) So what does one mean by saying that the Dharma fulfils all one's needs? I mean, on the practical level it doesn't. The Dharma doesn't provide you with food, clothing, shelter and medicine. So presumably it isn't those sort of needs that are being referred to. It's all your psychological and spiritual needs that are being referred to. But is it true, even on that level? Do you find that the Dharma fulfils all your needs? Do you really feel that, if you've got the Dharma, you don't really need anything else? Is it possible to achieve, you know, that sort of state of mind?

Voice: Psychologically, definitely.

S: And do you think one can take that quite literally? That you don't really need anything else?

Linda: ... like Milarepa had faith in the Dharma and all the other practical needs got taken care of. He was so devoted to practising the Dharma and relying on that, that it's like the Dharma took care of him, in a way, because he didn't go chasing after things that... (unclear)

S: But of course, it does sometimes happen that your material needs aren't met. Because, I mean sometimes, we're told that the Buddha came back from alms round with an empty begging bowl. Eh? But what about these other psychological and spiritual needs? How is it that the Dharma satisfies them all? I mean just think your need for, say, companionship, friendship - does the Dharma satisfy that?

Voices: Yes.

S: But what does one mean by the Dharma, of course? Obviously, that question also comes into it.

Daphne: If it's developing positive emotion, that satisfies you.

S: Mmm. Right. It's a question of the Dharma being not, say, an object, with which you are concerned, especially mentally concerned it's a sort of source of inner satisfaction. And when you have that, well, why should you, so to speak look out? Why should you have needs, in

that sort of way, in that sort of sense? So that also suggests, you can turn it around - that, if you've got very very strong needs, apart from the Dharma, you aren't really in touch with the Dharma, because you aren't able to draw on that inner source of satisfaction. Do you see what I mean?

[10]

So this is quite important that the Doctrine, the teaching, the Dharma, should be for you a real Wish Fulfilling Gem - that you should really feel it to be that! You should really see it in that sort of way! As really a many-splendoured thing - not just a dull dry old Dharma, a dull dry old teaching contained in a book or a lecture. (Pause)

All right, so that's the introductory verse - that's the salutation: "Homage to saintly Manjusri who was once a Prince" - or youth - "having bowed to the Victorious One, his Sons and the sublime experiences as well as to the Gurus who are their foundation, in relying on Milarepa's and Atisa's grace, I write for the benefit of myself and others this Jewel of the Noble Doctrine which is like the Wish-fulfilling Gem." But even with a little introductory verse of this sort, there's really, you know, a great deal of meaning. Any further questions on that? (Pause) Or is it clear now?

Annie Murphy: Bhante, the sublime experiences, do they - which point do they start at? Do you mean right at the beginning with the - of the 12 Nidanas? Sorry, I didn't get that.

S: Ah. If one thinks of the sublime experiences as the sequence of specifically transcendental states, as distinct from states which are simply emotionally positive then, that series, or that part of the series, starts with Knowledge and Vision of Things as They Really Are, eh? The basis of the distinction is that, that with the arising of the Knowledge and Vision of Things as They Really Are - which means that one becomes a stream entrant in Hinayana terms, there's no falling back. Do you see what I mean? You can't regress.

Kay: That's when it starts?

S: That's when that process of non-regression starts, With Knowledge and Vision of Things as They Really Are - Now I think, you've got five nidanas before that, haven't you? So these nidanas, certainly are part of the spiral - they're included in the positive nidanas, certainly. But they are positive only in a quite relative sense, they're still mundane and though they are definitely part of the spiral, you can fall back for them on to the round.

So if one looks at it more schematically, you see, you've got the round and then you've got - coming out of the round - the spiral. I'm sure you can, some of you, draw little pictures of this. So, going up the spiral, you've got, first of all, a series of - I think it's five positive nidanas - from which one can fall back on to the round. But then, from the next one, that is to say, from Knowledge and [11] Vision of Things as they Really Are, you get on to that part of the spiral from which you cannot, you know, fall back. You've passed the Point of No Return.

So, you don't simply distinguish, say, the round from the spiral, within the spiral you distinguish two sections. The first section being, in a sense, part of the spiral and also part of the round. It's as though a sort of loop goes out from the round to form part of the spiral. So these are what one might call 'emotionally positive' or simply psychologically positive nidanas; from which one can fall back. Whereas the series of nidanas belonging - beginning

with Knowledge and Vision of Things are they Really Are - that is strictly transcendental. Sometimes loosely, the whole series of twelve positive nidanas, as I call them, is also sometimes referred to as the 'twelve transcendental nidanas' - that is not, strictly speaking correct. The series becomes transcendental in the strict sense, only as from Knowledge and Vision of Things as they Really Are.

Marion: Could you say a bit more about the difference between transcendental and mundane?

S: Ah, Mmm. Transcendental means, - well one can only give similes - that which pertains to the Unconditioned. Perhaps I should go back a little - make it clearer in a more basic sort of way. Actually we're going to be coming on to this in this - the first paragraph of the text proper - these remarks should be a sort of introduction to that.

One has as the basic teaching of Buddhism, 'conditionality' you're familiar with that idea, eh? The fact that, in dependence upon one particular factor, another factor arises. So existence is seen in Buddhism in terms of 'conditionality'. Now there are two kinds of conditionality: there is that conditionality in which the movement, so to speak, is as between factors which are opposites - as when you go from pleasure to pain, from pain back to pleasure or loss and gain, and so on. These sort of pairs of opposites. But there is another kind of conditionality in which the movement is not as between factors which are opposites, but between factors which complement each other. That is to say, the succeeding factor complements or augments the preceding factor.

So to go back to the previous example, you don't go from pleasure to pain, or from happiness to suffering, one being the opposite of the other, - you go for instance, from pleasure to greater pleasure, from happiness to greater happiness, from say that happiness to something still greater - to bliss, to rapture. So that represents [12] the more, one might say, progressive sequence. There's a reaction sequence and a progressive sequence or creative sequence. Do you see the distinction? So what we call the 'round', the round of existence, is based upon the first type of conditionality and what we call 'the path' or the 'spiral', if you like, is based upon the second.

Now in that spiral, in that sequence of what we've been describing as positive nidanas, a point comes when the process becomes irreversible. That sequence of nidanas, or that sequence of - what shall I say - 'progressivity', which is irreversible, is referred to as 'the transcendental' and that which is - where you get that movement as between factors which are opposites, that is referred to as 'the mundane', yes? Is that quite clear?

Here of course, things are seen dynamically in terms of movement, in terms of conditionality. But of course, you can, so to speak, reify that. You can speak of the conditioned and the unconditioned. Do you see what I mean? Or the mundane and the transcendental. But even if you speak in that way, you are not concerned with two static things, though the language you use, this sort of language, may give that impression. You're really concerned with series. You're concerned with sequences, you're concerned with processes: a 'reactive process' and a 'creative process'. So you can if you like, speak of the Mundane with a capital 'M' and the Transcendental with a capital 'T', but really you are concerned with processes.

So the transcendental is really that irreversible and ever progressive sequence of positive mental states. You can, of course, have a sequence of positive mental states which is

reversible; that is this side of that Point of No Return. So from that particular sequence of reversible positive states you can fall back into reactive states. I mean, there is, as it were, a sort of limited and temporary creativity which is in-between reactivity and irreversible creativity.

So really one can divide the path into three major stages. There is the stage of 'reactivity', the stage of 'reversible creativity' and the stage of 'irreversible creativity'. Well, you know very well that sometimes you do feel very positive; you do feel very creative, but you can fall back from that into a reactive state, but once Knowledge and Vision of Things as They Really Are, has arisen, once you've entered the stream and become a 'stream-entrant', then you do not fall back in that way - you are irreversibly creative. Well, from then onwards there can be only progress for you; there can be no holding back. So, the principle object of the spiritual life is to get to that point.

[13]

Because once you've got to that point, there's no question of falling back, yes?

Annie Murphy: Bhante, would this also relate to - I remember you saying somewhere that, between - is it the mundane and the transcendental, is the spiritual? (S: Yes) So maybe the first eight could be the spiritual and then hopefully ...

S: Yes. I have said somewhere, I forget where, that I personally use the word 'spiritual' in two different ways. A general way, which covers what I've called here, the reversibly positive and the irreversibly positive. Once can use 'spiritual' to cover both of those or, and I sometimes do this also, you can use the word 'spiritual' to cover the reversibly positive. Then when you do that, you use the word, or I use the word 'transcendental' to characterize the irreversibly positive. Do you see what I mean? I hope it's not become complicated.

Voices: No, no, fine, really helpful.

S: So then you could say, if you speak in terms of the spiritual and the transcendental, if you use both of those terms, well, in that case 'spiritual' means reversibly positive and 'transcendental' means irreversibly positive. So when, also then again, when I use the word 'psychological' - I use it as more or less equivalent to 'spiritual', not going beyond that. When I say, for instance, "that's only a psychological teaching", well, it won't lead you into the irreversibly creative but at best into the reversibly creative.

Annie Murphy: Laying the foundation.

S: It's certainly laying a foundation, indeed. There is no access to the irreversibly creative except through the reversibly creative. In other words, you've got to be happy and healthy and human to some extent before you can become - I was going to say 'spiritual', but that means spiritual - before you can become a sort of transcendental personality.

Marion: Once you're in the transcendental, do those states condition one another still?

S: They condition one another, in the sense that, in dependence on the previous transcendental state, that is to say, the previous irreversibly creative state, there arises another succeeding such state, of an even greater degree or to an even greater degree. You don't

remain, so to speak, on the same level. It's as though [14] the more happy you are, the more happy you become, because the experience is, by its very nature accumulative. The fact that you go on being happy means that you cannot go on being just as happy as you were. You have to go on being more and more happy. (Laughter) Because if there's nothing to pull you down, so to speak, then the happiness just goes on accumulating. That's quite a thought, isn't it? You cannot but become more and more happy.

Rosie Ong: And the series is infinite ...

S: The series is infinite in the sense that, there is no, what shall I say ...

Dhammadinna: No end point, is there ...

S: No final term, in the process. This is why - again this is going to come up again at the very beginning of the text - we tend to think in terms of a sort of fixed goal, something which is static. Tend to think of the path, the spiritual path as a process. All right, but then that process terminates in a fixed, in a sense, in a static goal. And sometimes Buddhist teaching itself, you know, speaks in that sort of way. But it doesn't seem that that is really the case. It's as though when we contemplate this process of infinitely expanding creativity, well, it's sort of too much for us. There comes a point when the eye, so to speak, cannot follow it any more. It disappears over the horizon.

So that point, where it disappears over the horizon, we regard as the goal, but in a sense there is no goal. In another sense, there is a whole series of goals. There's no end. The process doesn't come to a stop, but again, there we mustn't take even that too literally. Because, one might say, well, one is going into higher and higher levels, higher and higher worlds. In a way, one is going beyond time. One might say one's sense of time is altering, all of the time, as one goes up this spiral. So it is not even that you are going on and on in the ordinary mundane sense - as we go on, say, from day to day and week to week. There comes a point, one might say, where time and (both) beyond time are no longer distinguishable. So in a way, it's neither a process, nor is it something static, but that's something we can't really imagine. I mean, that pair of opposites has been, I won't say transcended, in the sense that you sort of soar beyond, sort of look down on them, but you no longer see things in that particular way, any more. So all the problems that arise, intellectual problems that arise, out of your seeing things in this way, no longer arise. (Laughter and gasps)

[15]

Marion: Is that what people call the unconditioned?

S: So yes. (Laughter) One could say, it's what people call the unconditioned. It's not that strictly speaking, there are no conditions, but there are no conditions of a reactive type. But it is not a static sort of state. The unconditioned sort of indicates, what shall I say - the continuity, even the stability of that permanently creative process? Its constancy, let us say - the word indicates the constancy of that irreversibly creative process. Not a static thing, though sometimes we can't help using the language of static things, even you know, with reference to the transcendental. (Pause) Anyway, answering that question really brings us to the opening paragraph. Maybe someone would read that:

Rosie Anderson: "Generally speaking: The whole of reality is subsumed under the duality of

Samsara and Nirvana. Samsara is to be understood in the sense that its ultimate nature is Sunyata, its causal characteristic bewilderment and its primary characteristic its manifestation as misery. The ultimate nature of Nirvana is Sunyata, its causal characteristic is the end and dispersion of all bewilderment and its primary characteristic is liberation from all misery."

S: Hmm. So, "generally speaking, the whole of reality is subsumed under the duality of Samsara and Nirvana". That means that if you take the whole of reality, you can divide it, so to speak, initially into two aspects: one which is Samsara and the other which is Nirvana. Now this is, so to speak, a rather static way of looking at things. It is not that there are two things, called Samsara and Nirvana. There are two processes, we might say, - there is that process which is indicated by the symbol of the round; there is that process which is indicated by the symbol of the spiral.

You've got on the one hand, the sequence of the ordinary nidanas, and on the other, you've got the sequence of the transcendental nidanas, including the positive nidanas in the narrower sense. I think it's much more helpful if we think in these, as it were, dynamic terms, terms of process, rather than, as it were, static terms, in terms of things. And this dynamic way of looking at things, certainly seems more in accord with the Buddha's own teaching. So one might sort of translate this and say, generally speaking, the whole of reality is subsumed under the two processes of the reactive and the creative mind. One could say that, one could put it in that way.

Then Gampopa gets a little technical. We have to take help from Guenther's notes here. "Samsara is to be understood in the sense that its ultimate nature is Sunyata, its causal characteristic [16] bewilderment and its primary characteristic its manifestation as misery". So there are three kinds of characteristics here, or rather there's the ultimate nature, then there's a causal characteristic, and then there's a primary characteristic. So let's see what Guenther says about these - ultimate nature is of course, reasonably clear. (Long pause)

You might find the note a bit puzzling - ultimate nature is really that which cannot be conceptualized. This is what it really means, according to Guenther. This brings us in any case, to this question of Sunyata. Sunyata literally means emptiness or voidness. But one mustn't think of Sunyata again as a thing. One mustn't think of it ontologically, in technical language. When one speaks of Sunyata as being Emptiness or Voidness, what does that Emptiness refer to? Emptiness with regard to what?

Voice: The conditioned?

S: Er ... y-e-s- ...

Voices: ... and emptiness (Laughter)

S: Yes, but this is still a bit sort of ontological. I've thought about this for some time. It's in a way more basic than that. You see, conditioned, unconditioned - these are concepts. So if one thinks of Sunyata as that which is real emptiness, real voidness, well, then it will be an emptiness or voidness with regard to concepts. The term Sunyata really represents the fact that reality is empty of all concepts. Which is, you know, the rather metaphysical, roundabout Indian way of saying, that thoughts are quite powerless to destroy reality. Concepts don't apply to reality. It really means no more than this. I say, no more than this, but, you , it's a

very great field. So one might say, therefore, more correctly, I think, more truly, that the term Sunyata refers to the complete ineffability of experience. Especially ultimate experience. Especially the transcendental.

Reality is empty of all our concepts about reality. They just don't apply, they fall far short. And this is really very important, because if one even thinks of one's ordinary mundane experience, there's quite a lot that one can't really successfully or adequately put into words, even on the mundane level. Just recently I was thinking about the tour that I had in India. Well in the course of those three months, so many different things happened. It was a very, sort of virtually complex experience - it was very diverse. I think I'd find it very difficult, even if I was to get round to writing a book about my three month's [17] travels, I think it would be very difficult to convey adequately or accurately the full flavour of that whole experience; even though, one might say, well, something quite mundane, at least up to a point, mundane.

And I think we often do find that even with regard to our ordinary experiences. They're very difficult to communicate in words. We can approximately communicate; we can give some idea, but we can't give a really true and faithful idea. Especially perhaps, if people aren't very receptive. Supposing you spend a month on retreat and you have a really wonderful time and it really means a lot to you. You go back home or you go back to your community - you just try to explain to them what you've experienced. Well, very often, well, it's quite difficult because you know, they may not be very much in tune with what you've been experiencing. Maybe preoccupied with other things. And in any case, you may not have the words, you just, well, use words like 'wonderful', 'fantastic' - some words that you use on so many other occasions. But they don't really do justice to your experience. Words fall far short.

So when it comes to the transcendental, well, words fall even further short. Words become even less adequate. So the Transcendental, Reality, is you know, empty of concepts, your concepts, your words, your thoughts, your ideas. They don't really apply. They can't do justice to it. So Sunyata simply indicates this fact. The sort of ineffability of experience. And I think it's in a way, quite salutary to recall sometimes that the richness of experience, even mundane experience cannot be exhausted by words. It's only a very great writer, it seems, a poet, or someone of that kind, that type, who can really adequately convey something of his or her experience. Of life, or reality, or whatever. It isn't easy to do.

So the term Sunyata, I think, doesn't have some abstract metaphysical meaning, the significance of it is not primarily ontological. It is in a sense, only in a sense, and with or between single inverted commas, 'psychological'. That is to say, it's a sort of reminder that our experience is richer, richer than our vocabulary. Our experience transcends our capacity to describe that experience. And you know, that is very much the case with regard to the transcendental. So, "Samsara is to be understood in the sense that its ultimate nature is Sunyata". Ultimately you can't really say anything about the Samsara, even about your ordinary experience. You can't even describe a colour to someone who is blind. You can't give them an idea of what 'blue' means, [18] if they've never seen blue, if they're blind. How could you possibly do that? You can't. So the word 'blue', they may hear it and you may go on repeating it, but blue is empty so far as they are concerned. And of course, as we see later on, the ultimate nature of Nirvana is Sunyata, as well. Everything, whether mundane or transcendental is ultimately ineffable. Words cannot do justice to it. It goes beyond words. And I think, this is a very salutary reminder, because only too often we sort of think or we

take for granted, that we've sort of encapsulated reality in words. We know all about it because we've got a set of words that are at our disposal - which we think describes adequately, what we think we are thinking about. You know, we read books about Buddhism and we think about Nirvana and you get quite good eloquent descriptions about Nirvana. So we read those descriptions - you understand the words quite well and then you think you've understood Nirvana, you've understood what Nirvana means. But you haven't. You haven't understood anything at all.

So I think we need a lot more - well when I say 'we', I don't just mean the people actually present - I mean 'we' in the sense of perhaps our whole Western culture. We need more of humility, with regard to the power of words, the power of thoughts. Not to think that we know it all; that we've understood it all.; that the universe isn't mysterious any longer. No. It remains mysterious. Everything remains mysterious. You could maybe even translate Sunyata as mysteriousness. It's the mysteriousness of life, the mysteriousness of reality, the mysteriousness of the mundane, the mysteriousness of the transcendental. Yes, even the mundane is mysterious, a tree is mysterious, a flower is mysterious - human beings are mysterious. It's very difficult really to understand anything. So I think we need a much more acute sense of the limitations of our understanding. We really haven't, you know, got it all sorted out and sewn up by any means. There are great yawning gaps in our knowledge. (Laughter) Just as it is said, that there are enormous spaces between particles, aren't there? Any scientific person present? Yes. Enormous gaps between particles. There's more gap than particle. It's like that with our knowledge. There's much more ignorance than knowledge. But we very often don't realize it.

Dhammadinna: You need to try and make some sense of your experiences, though, don't you? You can't just experience - I mean it seems to be human faculty, that you try and make some [19] sense, get some meaning from your experiences. And I wonder if there's other ways of doing that apart from just sort of thinking, fixing it in thought.

S: Well, there's symbols, myth, there's even the visual image, if I may say so. These are alternatives. Perhaps there are sounds.

Dhammadinna: But it seems to be the most immediate way, isn't it? If you experience something, say, something quite ordinary and mundane, quite rich, you think about it, quite often in words. Or choose to write about it, or talk about it.

S: Well, that's fair enough, provided you keep your eye firmly fixed on the object, and make a real effort to describe that, and don't just sort of fall back on very stale stereotype words and think that you've described that particular object.

Dhammadinna: So it almost pushes you to use words more creatively, rather than not using them at all, say .. "well, I can't talk about it, so I won't". That's a bit of a cop out, isn't it?

S: Supposing someone asked you, "Well what sort of a walk you've had". Well, you can say, "Well, I had a lovely walk, I had a nice walk". But does that really describe your particular walk. Because everybody else on the retreat, could have had a nice walk or a lovely walk, but it would be a totally different walk, So supposing you were, let's say, a great writer. You'd be able to convey, to communicate something of your walk. The way that, say, the light was reflected in the puddles - the sunshine gleaming on the leaves; the sensation of the early

morning breeze, or something of that sort. Do you see what I mean? You should ask yourself, 'well, what did I experience? What made it a lovely day? What were the elements in that?' You really put your mind to it much more vigorously, much more one pointedly. And you wouldn't be satisfied with vague, sort of general descriptive terms. You'd want to make it much more concrete. In that way, you would start becoming more creative.

Vajrapushpa: We're very often very lazy in the way we use words. There's a sort of agreement between people what a lovely walk is, and you say what a lovely walk, but in fact your experience was much richer.

S: Yes. Well, not even word sometimes - people have recourse to sort of inarticulate sounds, well, grunts. (Laughter) "Well, what sort of walk did you have?" They, "Hmm. mm". (Laughter) Apparently means something quite basic.

[20]

Vajrapushpa: Also the tone of your voice and the expression on your face.

S: Yes, well, that is all part of the total business of communication. But, yes, people are lazy, aren't they, One really sees this, well, sometimes when one gets a letter, describing somebody's holiday or even when you read something in the newsletter or Shabda, only too often it's a bit stereotyped. I remember someone in the very early days of the Newsletter tried to do better, when she was asked to give a sort of vivid impression of the retreat she'd been on, so she wrote something like this, I think - 'Blue skies-sunshine-shady-walks-companionship' and there was about half a page of this effort of some sort, but it wasn't totally successful. It's also a question of asking ourselves, well, what do I really want to say? What do I have to say? Not just in connection with describing walks that you've been on but when you are communicating with other people in any way, under any circumstances. Well what do I really want to say, what do I have to say? Very often people aren't clear about this, there isn't anything very definite, there's a series of semi-articulate sounds, one could say, that's about all. So we need to be much more aware in this sort of area, aware of the limitations of words, even with regard to our mundane experience but also perhaps, nevertheless, aware of the possibilities of words. Words can say much more than we think. Human language is in fact very very rich and sometimes we confuse words, we fail to distinguish finer shades of meaning, we must become more aware of these things, not just say, it's a nice day, a lovely day, I had a good time" we overwork these little handful of words. And of course there are fashionable words, like fantastic, it's dreadfully overworked it doesn't mean anything at all any longer. What are the latest 'in' words?

Rosie: Amazing.

Vajrapushpa: Delightful.

?: Excruciating

Vajrapushpa: I suppose they get taken out of their original context because your experience is ineffable, originally somebody would say something is amazing because they were trying to describe an experience they didn't have a word for. So they imported amazing and eventually it became meaningless because you are trying to describe something you can't explain.

[21]

Vajrapushpa: The same as using superlatives all the time, it just overdoes it.

S: Yes, you want to communicate something powerful and vivid, so you just take the nearest strong word, the nearest superlative that comes to hand. So even the superlative, eventually, loses its force because it has been overworked and applies without any sort of discrimination. Luckily they haven't started overdoing words like transcendental.

Dhammadinna: It's really Transcendental! (laughter)

Rosy A: When you read things that were written in previous centuries you get a feeling of a very gentle language, it quite understates things sometimes. It strikes me that the way we speak now is very brash, very aggressive almost. You have got to be very careful that you don't lose the meaning, somehow it is almost quite competitive so you get all these superlative words and ...

S: Sometimes, perhaps one is trying to convince oneself that one experienced something when in fact you didn't.

V's: Yes.

S: Anyway, perhaps enough about that. We are just trying to find out about these causal characteristics and primary characteristics.

The causal characteristic is defined as the characteristic mode of behaviour in relation to other things. Then primary characteristic is non-causal, though it is caused by the causal characteristic. Shall we try and work that out in detail? It is actually quite simple.

So the causal characteristic of samsara is bewilderment, so that is its characteristic mode of behaviour in relation to other things. Samsara brings about bewilderment. How do you know that you are in the samsara, so to speak. How do you know that you're experiencing the samsara, what effect is it having on you? Well it is bewilderment, bewilderment is moha. Moha is the Sanskrit term. So samsara, its causal characteristic is that it brings about bewilderment, confusion.

Dhammadinna: So it is not saying that the cause of samsara is bewilderment.

S: No. No, this is its relation to, according to this sort of terminology, it is its characteristic mode of behaviour in relation to other things. Other things, presumably meaning other beings, because it is only conscious beings that can experience [22] bewilderment and confusion. So you can see that when you find yourself in any situation and you are just becoming more bewildered, more confused, well it just means that you are getting deeper in to samsara, that is its causal characteristic. The more you are subject to samsara the more you come under the influence of the reactive process, the more confused, the more bewildered you will be. The more you will be dominated by moha and therefore by lobha and dvesa, greed and hatred.

And then the primary characteristic is misery, that is to say dukkha, or suffering. This is caused by the causal characteristic but it is non-causal. In other words it is something which is experienced passively. If you think back to the causal chain, if you think back to the sequence

of the ordinary Nidanas, you remember that there was a cause process and an effect process. You had, say, a cause process of a previous life and effect of present life; cause process of present life, effect process of future life. It's as though the causal characteristic corresponds to causal process and primary characteristic corresponds to result process. So it is something that is received, experienced, it is not itself a cause.

V: Misery doesn't cause anything else?

S: No, misery in itself is not a cause. You can take the misery as an object for your causal activity, but the misery itself is not a cause.

Dhammadinna: Why is confusion seen as the causal characteristic, rather than greed and hatred?

S: Well, bewilderment or confusion or ignorance is seen as more basic. It's because of bewilderment or confusion that you indulge in craving. And it's because of the frustrated craving that you experience hatred or anger.

Dhammadinna: And what is the difference between moha and vidya.

S: Avidya.

Dhammadinna: Yes. Because you've got one in the centre of the wheel and one at the beginning of the twelve links.

S: It is not easy to discriminate them precisely. One might say that moha is a more emotive term. You know at the middle of the wheel of life there are the three creatures, the three animals. There's the pig, the cock and the snake. So that the pig here represents ignorance or moha; moha has a more emotive connotation. [23] It is bewilderment, confusion, delusion, infatuation, intoxication, it's all those things. It is not intellectual error, simply, not absence of knowledge. Avidya literally means ignorance, that is to say non-knowledge. But again, that is the literal meaning, as for the connotation, it is more than that - it's blindness, spiritual darkness. Sometimes they are used interchangeably, sometimes they are distinguished somewhat. Because if you think, in the nidana chain Avidya is used, Avidya gives rise to samskaras but when one speaks of the three unskillful roots, then it is bewilderment or confusion gives rise to greed and hatred. I think when one is concerned with these quite basic terms, for, in a way, quite basic situations it is very difficult to pin them down to a sort of single, clearly defined, technical meaning. They're used and perhaps deliberately used rather loosely.

So that one could say, that with regard to samsara, it has a sort of causal manifestation and a sort of effect manifestation. This seems to be the basis of the distinction, this rather scholastic distinction. I mean, causal characteristic and primary characteristic. And the same with Nirvana, the ultimate nature of Nirvana is Sunyata, nothing can really be said about it, but it's causal characteristic is the end and dispersion of all bewilderment and its primary characteristic is liberation from all misery. It is the same sort of thing, the same sort of distinction applied to Nirvana. Or to translate into more dynamic terms, into the transcendental nidanas.

Anyway we have to come to the end of that paragraph. Let's go over this first paragraph again because it is very important.

"Generally speaking the whole of reality is subsumed under the duality of samsara and Nirvana," but as we saw it is better to think of that duality, if one can call it that, in dynamic rather than in static terms. Better to think of it in terms of process, thinking in fact, of reality itself in terms of process and then think of that process itself as pertaining to different types of process, one reactive which we call samsaric and the other creative, which we call Nirvana. So "Samsara is to be understood in the sense that its ultimate nature is Sunyata", its ultimate nature is inexpressible. "Its causal characteristic bewilderment and its primary characteristic its manifestation is misery".

Dhammadinna: If you say you can't express the ultimate nature of something, does that mean it doesn't have an ultimate nature? I mean, an ultimate nature sounds like something fixed, if you [24] say its ultimate nature is ...

S: Well one could say even that language isn't satisfactory, and maybe this is one of the reasons why you can't express things adequately, because things are changing all the time. By the time you have finished your description the object has changed it's no longer the same object. One has to take that into consideration too. So we can manage some kind of communication because things, we might say, we make relatively stable, for certain purposes. Therefore communication is possible, otherwise communication wouldn't be possible at all. Whereas words are not fully adequate, reality cannot be fully revealed. So there is a residue, so to speak, which is incommunicable, which is only to be experienced.

Anjali: How did the term Sunyata originate?

S: According to Dr Conze, the word Sunyata, emptiness, has got a sort of double meaning. It is full, but it is also empty. It is like a bubble, the bubble is, as it were full, it is round but there's nothing inside. So according to Conze Sunyata has got that double meaning. You see things, they look substantial, they look round, they are like bubbles, but actually there are empty. But one mustn't imagine a literal empty state, it is really that there is something that is ungraspable, something that you cannot get at with thoughts and words.

I think it is probably best to understand it in the simplest possible way, simply as meaning that words can't say everything, concepts can't reveal everything. They are not totally inadequate but they are not fully adequate. One has to bear in mind that there is something in one's experience, in one's experience of life whether mundane or transcendental which just goes beyond words.

[25]

... entities, one called samsara, one called Nirvana. One can more usefully think of two processes, a reactive process and a quite creative process. The nature of the reactive process is to involve you more and more deeply in confusion and bewilderment. That's its so-called causal characteristic. And that manifests, you know, in terms of your actual experience as pain and suffering and that's its primary characteristic. And similarly with Nirvana or what is called here, Nirvana.

It's ultimate nature is Sunyata, the ultimate nature of the transcendental process is Sunyata.

This too is beyond words. But its causal characteristic is to bring an end to all bewilderment, and its primary characteristic is liberation from all misery. Here, it's expressed in negative terms. You see what I mean? Now if one wanted one could express in more positive terms, especially if one thought in terms not just of Nirvana, which is itself grammatically negative, but in terms of this creative process (both unseverable and universal??)... anyway, in which creativity constantly increases. And one could speak of, you know, that creative process being of such a nature that bewilderment and suffering are progressively eliminated, from that process. Not that bewilderment and suffering cease to exist and there's nothing else left, there's just a blank or void. It is as though the creative process gradually disentangled itself from those things.

So there's a sort of reactive process of getting more and more deeply involved in bewilderment and misery, and a creative process of gradually disentangling oneself from bewilderment and misery, and becoming more and more free, more and more liberated, more and more Enlightened. And those are the two possibilities, as I think I've made clear in some lectures. They're possibilities that face us every minute even every second. You can either act, react, respond reactively or creatively.

If someone asks you to give a hand with the washing up, well, there are two possibilities at once placed before you: to react or to respond, to be creative. You see so, it's not just a choice that confronts you on rare spiritual occasions. It's a choice that confronts you all the time. So when you get, so to speak, into the habit of responding rather than reacting, when you are creative in a situation rather than reactive, then you get gradually on to the spiritual path. First of all, in the more psychological sense by way of simple emotional positivity, and then gradually in the more transcendental sense by way of an actual vision of the transcendental. So it's all really very simple. There's no sense in postponing your spiritual goals, your spiritual choices. A choice confronts you every instant. I think you can even put it even in quite crudely simple terms, like "shall I go and see a film or shall I go meditate at the Centre", that sort of thing. These are the choices that confront you [26] all the time. Someone said something to you, something a bit disagreeable. Shall you say what you really think or shall you just check yourself mindfully and respond in a more positive way, more helpful and more constructive? So when, one might say, you tend in any given situation to respond creatively rather than simply to react, then you are on the spiritual path. At least, you are on the spiritual path as far as the early stages of the path are concerned. And of course, you just don't sit back waiting for opportunities to respond. You are, you know, yourself, inherently, as it were responsive. You're creative, so you go out and create situations of a more positive nature.

So do you get a definite picture, as it were, from this opening paragraph? It's very short but it's very meaningful. It lays down the basic philosophy, as it were. But I think, it, as I said, is more helpful if we can translate the comparatively static terminology into something more dynamic and I think, more faithful really to the Buddha's own original teaching.

One can also translate, not into another set of conceptual terms, but into a set of symbols. That is to say, the Dharma, as the path on the spiral, the mandala of the Buddhas. One should have this very, sort of vivid sense of life, one's experience, containing these two possibilities which are being presented all the time, either of, you know, making another round of the wheel of life, or getting on to the spiral, progressively spiralling upwards. So it's not that you've made your choice, some days ago, then that's that, you're definitely on the one rather than the other. No, it isn't as simple as that. As I said, every instant a choice confronts you, at

least in the early stages of one's spiritual life until you're so firmly ... (Pause)

All right then, so much for that first paragraph. Is that clear? Or is it as clear as it can be? Now lets go on to the second paragraph. Would someone like to read that?

Dhammadinna: "However, the question may arise: who is bewildered in this confusion called Samsara? The answer is: all sentient beings of the three world-spheres. Or, it may be further asked, from which fundamental stuff does this bewilderment come? And the answer is: from Sunyata. The motive behind this bewilderment is great ignorance and the bewilderment works in the mode of life of the six kinds of living beings. Its similes are sleep and dream and it has existed since beginningless Samsara. It is vicious because we live and act solely in misery. Can this bewilderment ever become transcending awareness born from wisdom? It will do so as soon as unsurpassable Enlightenment has been attained. But if you think that it will disperse by itself, you should remember that Samsara is notorious for being without end."

S: All right. "However the question may arise as to who is bewildered in this confusion called Samsara?" Does one ever get the feeling or, you know, [27] the sensation that one's life is a life of confusion?

Voices: Yes, yes.

S: Or do you think it is all clear, straight-forward, lovely, nice. (General laughter) There are little, sort of clearings in the confusion, aren't there? Even little glimmerings of light through the confusion. Even very small things, which one might have thought could be sorted out, made quite simple and straight-forward, they're so confused. I mean, recently I was attending a meeting (I won't tell which meeting it was, something or other down in London). One of the things we were to do there was to sort out some accounts which had got into confusion. But it seemed as though there was no end to it. If you put one thing right, it made something else wrong. (Laughter) And, it was extraordinary, you could not get a clear picture of what was happening or what the overall position was. It was very very difficult. It really was confused. I started having a dreadful feeling that we were never going to get it sorted out, you know, month after month for years. It would never be sorted out. It was so confused and this was just a matter of a few simple little accounts. Then, of course, there is that other sort of area of confusion, human relationships, whether with one's parents or brothers and sisters or other people. Well, sometimes it seems so confused. And sometimes you try to make things better but you make them worse. And if you look in the political sphere, there are so many confusions and entanglements - so many people trying to do good, apparently or sort things out. But, no, they only make things worse. In social life, sometimes social workers, welfare workers, they sometimes even seem to make things worse, more than better. So it's as though, confusion really is a hallmark, or the causal characteristic as the text said, of Samsara. What was called bewilderment in the previous paragraph is now being called confusion. I can take it that these are really synonymous - in the original it is the same word. But anyway, does one not have this feeling of life being very confused? Which means that very often you can't bring it under any sort of control. As soon as you get one things under control, something else goes out of control. Or even the act of bringing one thing under control puts another thing out. (Laughter) So this is called samsara. What else can you expect? It's the nature of Samsara. When you, with your reactive mind interacting with other people and their reactive mind, well, what can the result be but confusion? Anything other than that is just luck. (Laughter)

Linda Moody: That just brought to mind, the novels of Kafka who really depicts that sort of confusion.

[28]

Dhammadinna: I suppose if you're really confused, you have a strong desire to make a fresh start and I was just wondering, I don't know how relevant this is, but, today the world seems well, more confused - but because you've got a global picture - there's so many wars and confusions and knotty things that never seem to get sorted out - there also seems to be a tendency towards people wanting to make complete fresh starts, i.e. Born-again Christianity is a bit like ... I don't think it works.. Maybe that's partly where that desire comes from, to sort of wipe the slate clean, to start again. A rebirth.

S: That is certainly understandable, but it usually consists in taking those same people out of their existing circumstances and putting them in a fresh set of circumstances, but of course they bring their confusion with them. (DD: Yes) Because the confusion essentially is within their own reactive minds.

A Voice: Treating symptoms.

S: But nonetheless, sometimes, it does help to get into a fresh situation. If you have really seen certain things clearly, but, external conditions are preventing you from putting your greater clarity into operation, well, sometimes it does help to have a change of scene, even though of course, that does not itself solve the problem. But maybe this is why sort of teleologically speaking, though one mustn't really use teleological language in Buddhism, this is why, for instance, you die and are reborn. It is to give you another chance. Because if you had to sort out this life - you were made to stay here until you had sorted it out (Laughter), you know, just kept on living, growing older and older and having to sort it all out before you could die and pass on, well, you would be here forever. So you're allowed to die, you see? And you can forget it and put it all behind you. You can wake up, not knowing, not even remembering, in most cases, the previous muddle, the previous confusion. You can start with a brand new body, a brand new brain in a new or practically new situation. Admittedly, yes, you've brought over, you know, the same reactive mind. But at least you're given another chance.

Paula Turner: Do you think this happens, when you are reborn, because I often get the feeling that if only I'd have known then I wouldn't have, I'd have; conditions would be different, and sort of thinking well, in the next life, I know I'm not going to do that! (Laughter)

S: If this conviction goes very deep, well you'll carry over that conviction. Maybe not in a conscious form but in the way of a sort of [29] tendency, not to do certain things, not to get involved in certain situations. For instance, I notice something of this sort happening when I went to India. Because when I'm in England, I'm involved in the situation here while I'm in India, I'm involved in the situation there. I mention this especially because when I was in India, I was so much involved in the situation there, I could not think about the situation here, or any of its problems. Because you're just in another situation. You're temporarily dead to the past, the old situation. Whereas when I come back to England well, I'm not involved in the Indian situation and therefore, you know, the problems inherent in that situation, aren't so immediately present to me. And I think much the same sort of thing happens, even more radically when you're reborn. And each time hopefully, in a reasonably positive life, there's a

little residue, almost of wisdom which you sort of take with you, in a manner of speaking, and which does influence you. And you have the fresh start, the new set of surroundings.

Linda Moody: Is that the Samskaras? Is that corresponding to the Samskaras?

S: Very roughly, you can say the samskaras represent the ongoing process. Not that you literally take anything with you. It's you that you take with you. You are modified in a particular way. It's that modified you, that so to speak, take with you which is not different from you.

Paula Turner: Because you are, sort of creating your conditions even in this life, all the time, through repeated frustrations in something that will motivate you to create different conditions,

S: But the traditional Buddhist view is that if, say, in the midst of the present set of conditions, you have, so to speak, risen above them, you haven't just reacted, you've responded in a positive way, there you are in the long run, setting up a better set of conditions within which to function and vice versa.

Vajrasuri: Do you think any modification happens during the Bardo state?

S: I think that also has to be taken into consideration, because then you are given an opportunity of a completely different sort. Not a better or a worse set of conditions, circumstances, but a sort of open space within which you can experience - using the static language - the unconditioned. And if you can manage to experience something of that, well, that too can be carried over.

[30]

Dhammadinna: You can't really make fresh starts in ... if you try and blot things out, it doesn't seem to work, it doesn't seem to (unclear) political circles. And sometimes you get a Communist regime which tries to completely wipe out a previous way of life and it, it doesn't seem to work totally. I mean it's a negative thing, that wipes out positive things as well in a culture.

S: It doesn't see what's positive.

Dhammadinna: It seems to sit on something which in the end re-emerges. So change, it seems has to be ... can't work quite like that, not totally clear things out of the way. You have to transform rather than wipe out.

S: Yes, well this is, in a way, what is said on the grandest possible scale at the end of this paragraph. "Can this bewilderment ever become transcending awareness born from wisdom? It will do so as soon as unsurpassable Enlightenment has been attained". One is transformed into the other.

The Hinayana, if one reads it too literally, seems to suggest that you just put the Samsara behind you. But the Mahayana, speaks much more in terms of transforming the samsara into NIRVANA, almost. But anyway, we mustn't go on to that too quickly. "However, the question may arise, who is bewildered in this confusion called Samsara? The answer is:

sentient beings of the three world-spheres". The three world-spheres being of course, the Kamaloka, or Kama Avacara, the Rupaloka and the Arupaloka. I mentioned these earlier on, you may remember. Are you clear about these?

Vajrasuri: Not the Arupaloka.

S: Well, let's start with the Kamaloka. Kama is really sensuous desire. It's desire for experience through the gross sense organs, and it includes of course, the human world. And then going down there's the animal world, the preta world and the hell realm. And going up a little, the asura realm and the lower deva realms. Here there are physical bodies, there are physical objects, gross and subtle. There are physical sense organs, gross and subtle, and there is a desire, an urge to experience things through one's subtle or gross sense organs, to experience these subtle or gross sense objects. This is called the 'kama-loka'.

Anjali: Why do you say you go up to the asura and deva realms?

S: Because they were traditionally regarded as higher, though in the case of the asura loka, sometimes it's regarded as lower. But there are all sorts of subdivisions of the gods, in that sense, it's higher. [31] The gods are regarded as higher and the asuras also, when they are regarded as gods and therefore as higher because they're longer lived, more happy etc. Coming from that purely mundane point ...

Dhammadinna: Is it because the desire for sense expression is more subtle?

S: Sense experience?

Dhammadinna: Yes, sense experience.

S: I say, whether gross or subtle to include say, the deva realms which are included in the kama-loka. So you get the picture, as it were?

And then in the case of the rupa loka, there are, these consist of, on the objective side so to speak, of higher deva realms. 'Rupa' here means something like archetypal form. You, as it were, enter up on these worlds by ascending to the dhyana levels. In other words, when you transform yourself subjectively, you experience things in a different way, objectively. So when you say, free yourself from sense experience, when you no longer have any desire for sense experience you may even be quite oblivious, literally to the senses. Your consciousness may be turned within. You experience the dhyana states progressively - that is to say, the rupa dhyana states. Consciousness becomes more and more unified, more emotionally positive. The subject-object duality becomes less, though it is not yet abolished. So you start perceiving things, you start seeing things in a different way. You start seeing, as it were, or even literally, from the point of view of Buddhist tradition, a different world. You're in a different world. And you don't see as it were, gross physical objects. You see rupas. You see deva forms. You see a sort of divine landscape, a transfigured landscape. You see a heavenly world. You see heavenly beings, archetypal forms and images in that world. Do you see what I mean? This is the rupa loka. The world you might say, of visionary experience. The world of visionary and meditative experience.

Dhammadinna: Does that mean you see that within or do you see the external world

transformed?

S: Well it's both. You experience this, as it were, higher world. It seems as though people's experience varies. It might even be a question of levels. You can see as it were, this higher world shining through from behind the sense world itself. As it were, illuminating the sense world from within. Or, it may be that the sense world as it were, vanishes and you only perceive that higher world. One can think in the West of [32] some of the experiences of William Blake, when he saw, well, angelic forms or whatever.

Kay: Would he have been in a dhyanic state, or something?

S: Yes, yes. I'm leaving aside little refinements of distinctions, as it were, but it's basically in a sort of dhyanic state, state of higher consciousness in which one sees things in this different way, and also sees a sort of luminous ...

Kay: What about when we smell devas, when we might be just sitting in a room not necessarily in a dhyanic state?

S: One has got the five physical sense organs. Some physical sense organs are, sort of, more refined or more developed than others, and usually it is said that sight and hearing are the most developed of all. And therefore, when it becomes a question of higher forms of perception, they seem to have more affinity with sight and hearing. And therefore, we usually describe them in terms of sight and hearing sounds - hearing music, hearing mantras or seeing forms. We don't usually speak in terms of, say, a smelling super sensuous sense, because the physical organ of smell is comparatively gross, but nonetheless that does sometimes happen. Sometimes one perceives, as it were, a scent which is not a phenomenon of the sense world. In the Vimalakirti Sutra there's a reference to certain Buddhas and Bodhisattvas communicating through scents. We can hardly imagine that. But sometimes there can be, what shall I say, experiences of, tactile experience which aren't really quite just on the kamaloka level, as when you find when sometimes you're meditating you might feel a sort of breeze-like sensation. It's nothing to do with any actual physical wind. Do you see what I mean? This is something belonging to a subtler world, so to speak. You are, to some extent, in that subtler world.

Kay: But sometimes when, well, myself, I'm not in a dhyanic state to experience ...?

S: Well, one might say, what does one mean by being in a dhyanic state? Sometimes, well, there are intermediate degrees. Sometimes one's ordinary consciousness is sort of penetrated by something dhyana-like. It's not as though there's the line drawn between the Kama loka and the rupa loka. They sort of interpenetrate at the edges and sometimes when you are a bit quiet, by yourself, maybe on your solitary retreat, you may not be actually meditating, but consciousness can be a bit ..., your kama loka consciousness can be a bit penetrated by a rupa loka consciousness.

[33]

Marion: Is this the sort of state that people who have sudden spiritual experiences would be in? I was thinking of some of the examples in Cosmic Consciousness, where people were suddenly confronted by something ...

S: Well it could be that or it could be even something higher. It's difficult to generalize. But one thinks in terms of a sort of whole range of experiences with the lower shading off into the higher. Not a rigidly demarcated band of experience. But anyway, the rupa loka, this sort of, the higher reaches of it were, or the intermediate reaches even, of this range, when you're subjectively changed and when your perception of things is therefore modified and you are in a sense, not only in a different state, but in a different world and you perceive archetypal visionary forms. These are either, as it were, hovering over those which you normally perceive or as it were, by themselves. You know what I mean? by sort of hovering over? You are not completely out of the kama loka, maybe you've got your eyes open and you're seeing trees and flowers and houses and people, but there's something else that you're seeing at the same time with another kind of eye, another kind of vision. But sometimes it happens that the sense ..., the operation of the physical sense, is suspended as it is during sleep or deep trance, and you're only experiencing that other visionary world. You are not only fully into that but exclusively into that, for the time being. So these are the rupa dhyana realms or the rupa loka. And then beyond that there is the arupa loka, which is much more difficult to describe.

I mention the rupa loka is characterized by light, figures of form you see are luminous or at least colourful, but it's as though in the arupa loka, the experience of light increases. It becomes more and more intense. And there isn't the same definiteness of form, as you get in the rupa loka. That is why it is called the arupa: -formless. It is not literally formless, because there is still subject-object duality there. But it's as though there's a sort of subtle form which is created by differences in the intensity of light perceived. This is why these higher realms, these arupa loka realms are described in terms of light.

And there are as it were, beings called Brahmas, which are beings of pure light. One can't describe it as other than that.

Linda: How does this relate to the Sambhogakaya?

S: That is transposing into a different context, that is to say, context of Mahayana. But one could say that, in the case of the Sambhogakaya, represents well, the assemblage of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the archetypal plane, on the rupa and arupa loka planes, one could say. Except that traditionally speaking, these are regarded as mundane, whereas Buddhas and [34] Bodhisattvas are transcendental. But when they appear, as it were, well in what other form can they appear? So the Sambhogakaya represents, one might say, these rupa loka and arupa loka levels, but imbued with a transcendental significance. As regards form, it is difficult to distinguish between a deva and a Bodhisattva, because devas are represented as, one might say, sixteen-year-olds, beautiful black hair, lotuses, well, devas and bodhisattvas are both represented like that, but in the case of the Bodhisattva, the significance is transcendental, not mundane. It is not just a refinement of the mundane, though that more refined mundane form acts as a sort of vehicle or expression for the transcendental.

Rosy Anderson: Did you say that these are still mundane, the rupa loka and the arupa loka?

S: Yes, according to general Buddhist tradition, the Kama Loka, Rupa Loka and Arupa Loka are all mundane, although with increasing degrees of refinement. That is to say, they are all levels of reversible creativity. And beyond is the transcendental. There are one or two provisos to be added there, but I'm not going to go into that. At present that would make it too complicated, totally confusing. This is the traditional view.

So, "However the question may arise, who is bewildered in this confusion called Samsara the answer is all sentient beings in the three world-spheres". Beings in hell are confused and bewildered. Well, that's obvious. Pretas, animals, human beings, asuras, all devas, even Brahmas, in the perspective of Enlightenment are all confused. In some of the Pali texts, you find, you encounter, some confused Brahmas, Brahmas who think they created the universe and so on. In other words: God. (Laughter) Well, a Buddhist would say, "God himself is confused because he thinks he is omniscient and all the rest of it. He doesn't realize that he's been born in that higher realm because of his previous good deeds. But nothing more than that. He hasn't actually created everything. That's his delusion." Therefore, the text says: "all sentient beings of the three world-spheres", they're all bewildered, and to some extent, however slightly, they suffer. Even the Gods, you know, have to die one day.

Dhammadinna: What about the brahmin we talked about earlier, Sanat Kumara? He's an arupa loka Brahma.

S: Ah, this raises one of the questions I wasn't going to go into? (Laughter) I'll just touch upon it. You might have noticed in that question which Mahagovinda put to the Brahma, he says: [35] "Brahmaloka" Brahmaloka. "How may a mortal attain the immortal Brahmaloka?" Do you see anything odd about that?

Dhammadinna: Well, if it's mundane, it can't be immortal.

S: Yes, if it's mundane, it can't be immortal. If it's immortal, it can't be mundane. So it would seem that in the very early days of Buddhism, perhaps - I think one has to be very tentative here that the higher, the Brahmaloka, in the higher sense, was a synonym for the transcendental, a sort of mythological synonym for the transcendental. Because we know the Buddha used these Brahma terms quite extensively. What we call the spiritual life in Pali, is usually called the Brahmacharya isn't it? Remember when the Buddha sent out his first sixty disciples, what did he say to them? He said: "Teach the Dharma which is Kalyana, that is lovely, beautiful, spiritual, in its beginning, middle and end. Proclaim the perfectly pure Brahmacharya, the Brahma-faring". The spiritual life itself was indicated by this term. So it was the Brahmacharya, the Brahma faring, the walk to or with Brahma. The Brahma here seems to have indicated, at least at that time, the transcendental. It was only later perhaps that Nirvana was appropriated exclusively to the transcendental, and Brahma was used in the merely restricted sense of the higher levels of the purely mundane. But that seems to be not the case earlier on. Not that earlier on, there was no distinction between mundane and transcendental. Yes, there was. It's a question of terminology. Do you see what I'm getting at? We have various vestiges of that more positive use of the 'Brahma' in as I said Brahmacharya. The Buddha uses the word 'Brahma', which is of course connected as synonymous with bhikkhu, Brahmana, arhant and so on.

In the Dhammapada, there's Brahmanavagga. Here 'Brahmana' doesn't mean brahmin in the caste sense, - Brahmana here means someone who is liberated, who has gained Nirvana. In Mahayana Buddhism, they don't speak of Brahmacharya, they speak of Bodhicarya: the faring towards Bodhi.

Dhammadinna: That's clearer, that's clarified in a sense.

S: Anyway, I hope I haven't confused you, because one does find that terms change their

meaning. Sometimes terms are used in a broader sense, sometimes in a narrower sense. In the same way that I sometimes use the word 'spiritual' in a very broad sense, to cover both the reversible creative and the irreversible creative. In the same way, in very early Buddhism, the term 'Brahma' and 'Brahmaloka' [36] were used both to cover the higher reaches of the mundane and what we would call now the transcendental. But later, the term came, it seems, to be restricted simply to the higher reaches of the mundane. And when traditional Buddhism distinguished between kamaloka, rupaloka and arupaloka, and when arupa and arupa lokas include Brahmaloikas, well, here the Brahmaloikas are regarded of course, as mundane, and Nirvana is beyond; the transcendental.

So: "Or it may further be asked, from which fundamental stuff does this bewilderment come? And the answer is: from Sunyata". Well I would say that means it doesn't come from anywhere. There's no ultimate first cause in Buddhism. The samsaric process goes back and back as far as one can perceive. One never comes to a point where there is some unchanging first cause, like God in Christianity or Islam. "The motive behind this bewilderment is great ignorance ." Not that there's a primordial great ignorance which comes first. It's always there. It's the most pressing, the most fundamental. "And the bewilderment works in the mode of life of the six kinds of living beings. Its similes are sleep and dream." Why sleep and dream?

Linda: One of the titles for the Buddha is the Fully Awakened One, isn't it? So we could think of ourselves as being in dream states and so on.

S: Yes, one can think of ordinary life of being in a state of sleeping, dreaming, as distinct from the state of full awakening. "It has existed since beginningless Samsara." As I mentioned, in Buddhism, samsara is regarded as being without any absolute first beginning. However far back you go, you can't find it, the point at which it all began. Now why is that? Think on that a little more deeply.

Dhammadinna: Because you're looking at it from the state you're already in, which is a particular time reference.

S: It's as though subject and object are correlative. Where there's a subject, there's an object. Where there's an object, there's a subject. So when you sort of go back in time, you, the subject, always encounter an object. You'll never come to a point where there's no object, just because you are there as the subject, you perceive the correlative object. So there's no first beginning of the process however far you go back. A point of first beginning cannot be perceived. That is not to say there is no beginning. It is that a first beginning cannot be perceived. But supposing you don't, [37] supposing you change the perceiving subject. You don't perceive any object. Well, then also, you wouldn't perceive any beginning. (Laughter) So you're in another world, where the whole question of subject and object (Dhammadinna: doesn't arise) - beginning itself, doesn't arise. All these questions arise within, or even experiences, within, the state of confusion or bewilderment itself.

Voice: Within duality.

S: Within duality, you could say, yes. "But it is vicious because we live and act solely in misery." Vicious means extremely bad - samsara is extremely bad, vicious. Because we live and act solely in misery, suffering. Do you agree with that? Or do you think it's too extreme? What is meant in any case, by living and acting solely in misery? Does he mean that every

single experience - every minute of the day is painful? Does he actually mean that?

Dhammadinna: No. They're impermanent, so they can't - they're potentially painful.

S: They're potentially painful, to the extent that you're inclined to hang on to them. (END OF SIDE 1)

Perhaps one should make clear at this point, the distinction between the experience of suffering and insight into the Aryan truth of suffering. Have you gone into this at all at any time? Has anyone gone into it with you?

Voice: Not sure. (Laughter)

S: You're familiar with the Four Noble Truths, the Aryan Truths? (Laughter) Dukkha, the Cessation of Dukkha, no sorry Dukkha, cause of Dukkha, cessation of Dukkha, way leading to cessation of Dukkha. So what is this truth of Dukkha? When you understand the truth of Dukkha, what do you understand? When you see the truth of Dukkha, do you experience everything as Dukkha? Is that what it means?

Annie Fowler: You would if you really thought about it. (Laughter)

S: But does it mean, to put it more emphatically, when you have Insight into the truth of suffering - that is to say, when you're Enlightened, do you experience, actually experience everything as suffering? Do you experience then, only painful sensations?

[38]

Voices: No.

S: Well, what happens, when you experience the truth of suffering?

Rosy Anderson: You experience an underlying unsatisfactoriness.

S: You're saying really the same thing, because you're experiencing suffering.

Debbie Seamer: You no longer experience that suffering. If you see into that suffering, then I mean, by having real Insight into that, it's like you detach yourself from it. So therefore, you no longer experience it as suffering.

S: Well, yes and no. Because supposing, well, someone sticks a pin in you. Is that a painful sensation even though you've got the Insight into suffering? Do you experience it as a painful sensation or not?

I mean you do. If you look at the life of the Buddha, the Buddha did say when he was very old, according to the Parinibbana Sutta, that he was only free from physical suffering when he entered into a dhyanic state. So clearly, the Buddha had Insight into the truth of suffering, but nonetheless, he experienced physical pain, physical suffering.

Dhammadinna: So would the experience of suffering only be on the physical level after your Insight into the truth of suffering and not experienced emotionally?

S: Yes, if you have Insight into suffering, if you see that all mundane things are suffering, it does not mean you're exempt from physical suffering - you may have to suffer in that you still have a physical body - that is to say, you may have to suffer so long as you identify yourself with the physical body and have sense experience and function through the sense experiences. But there is no mental suffering, or one might even say no spiritual suffering.

But why I mentioned that point is that: sometimes the wrong interpretation is given, that Insight into the truth of suffering means seeing that all experience, all mundane existence, is actually suffering. But that is not so. Because that means that someone who was Enlightened, could not have a mundane pleasurable experience. That is not the case. But even when someone who has Insight into the [39] truth of suffering, has a mundane pleasurable experience, they see quite clearly its limitations and they do not make it a basis of mental craving, and therefore it does not become transformed into, so to speak, an experience of suffering. But when you have Insight into the truth of suffering, it does not mean that any pleasurable experiences that you might have had are actually transformed into painful experiences. But this is what some modern expositions of Buddhism seem to suggest. So it is quite important to understand this. So Insight into the truth of suffering doesn't affect your actual experience of suffering, except to the extent that because you have Insight into the truth of suffering, craving is eliminated and you will not experience any suffering which is directly due to craving. But that suffering which is inseparable from embodied existence as such, with or without craving, that suffering you will continue to experience and that pleasure also, which is inseparable from embodiment in conditioned existence. And also you will experience pleasurable states of consciousness, due to the fact that you are free from craving.

Annie Fowler: I'm more confused now than I was before.

S: Well, what are you confused about?

Annie: I don't understand how it is if you're mentally free from suffering, that you can still physically experience suffering?

Voice: Pain.

Annie: Pain.

S: Well, we don't. You've got five senses. Your sense consciousnesses are functioning and when your sense consciousnesses are functioning with your physical sense, well, you are susceptible to both sensations of pain, sensations of pleasure. In fact you cannot experience the one without the other. Your mental state may not be affected. You may not be acting (Annie: That's what I mean.) with craving or hatred or impatience irritation. These reactions will not take place but you will have the bare, as it were, experience of the pain or the pleasure.

Paula Turner: It sounds like quite dangerous ground actually. Well, it sounds quite good to be able to experience pleasure without getting caught up in all the ...

[40]

S: Well, so you can.

Paula: Well, I think I'd get stuck there for a while. (Laughter)

S: Ah, well good. But if that was due to Insight and it can only arise because of Insight, on account of the very nature of Insight, you would not get stuck. If, as a result of previous good actions, you experienced uninterrupted pleasurable sensations without Insight, as the gods are said to do in heaven, well, then you could get stuck. But, if your freedom from all suffering except incidental physical suffering is due to Insight, well you can't get stuck in that because Insight is of such a nature that you can't get stuck in anything anywhere.

Marion Monas: Still, if you are subject to sense conditioning how can you ever experience formless dhyanas?

S: Because you can go, as it were, into a state of trance. You can inhibit the functioning of the sense consciousnesses as in the so-called deep meditation. Why I'm going into this question of suffering is that people misinterpret Buddhism in general terms that ... the impression is that, according to Buddhism everything is suffering. But that is not quite the Buddha's teaching.

According to Buddhism you're supposed to see everything as suffering. But what is that 'seeing everything as suffering'? What does that really mean? It does not represent a negation of the possibility of pleasurable experience, but it only maintains that in the presence of craving, if the pleasurable experience gives rise to craving, well, then the pleasurable experience, itself will result in suffering. But it does not deny the existence of mundane pleasurable experience. Even for the Enlightened person. In fact, the Enlightened person will experience more pleasure, not less, because craving will have been eliminated and craving is productive of a great deal of mental suffering. Sometimes on account of your craving you involve yourselves in situation of physical suffering. So these will be eliminated too. But that suffering which is, as it were, not connected with any factor inseparable from embodied existence, that you will continue to experience, even after your full Enlightenment, until such time as the physical body drops off. (Laughter)

So it is vicious because we live in that solely in misery. This must be understood correctly. "Can this bewilderment ever become transcending awareness born from wisdom?"

[41]

Transcending awareness is, I think, the way Guenther translates 'vinyana', vinyana born from prajna. "It will do so as soon as unsurpassable Enlightenment has been attained." Here the emphasis is a lot more positive. It's as though - not that you put aside bewilderment and then gain Enlightenment - you gain Enlightenment and that presents the transformation of the bewilderment itself. The emphasis is rather more positive. But if you think that it will disperse by itself, you should remember that samsara itself is notorious for being without end! (Giggles) There is no automatic spiritual development, not until you reach the Point of No Return. The lower evolution has carried you so far, but the higher evolution proceeds differently. Now you've got to take up the struggle as an individual. So this is where effort and where energy is needed. Is that paragraph also reasonably clear?

Dhammadinna: Can you just go back to the other bit. I've got a question I'd like to ask, about suffering, and after Enlightenment, you can still experience physical suffering. That could be in the moment because you've stubbed your toe or something. But is it also possible to

experience physical suffering as a result still of your past karma, as an Enlightened being? Because one arhant actually got murdered, didn't he?

S: Well, the Buddha himself experienced physical suffering in that way, as when you know, Devadatta rolled down a boulder and a splinter flew off and pierced the Buddha's foot, and also when the Buddha suffered from dysentery. This would not be related to any previous karmic factor but certainly the being pierced by a splinter of rock is, so even in the case of someone who has gained Enlightenment, there is the debt of the past to be paid and that may involve physical suffering. But in a way, you'll suffer less because of your more Enlightened state. In other words, you'll just have the bare physical suffering, you won't make it worse for yourself by resentment and so on. Or it may be that you are able to ascend to higher planes of consciousness where you're not conscious of the physical senses at all, and therefore, not actually in a manner of speaking, feel the pain, as the Buddha said he did sometimes.

Marion: In a sense, Bhante, could you say then that pain may not necessarily result in your suffering, do you think? Or is it ...

S: Well, put it this way: we suffer from pain, usually more than we need to, because of our mental attitude. If you can change the [42] mental attitude, you might even find that the pain is not so painful. One example is sometimes given about childbirth. If the mental attitude is different, you don't experience, so to speak, the pains of childbirth as much as [you] might otherwise; or even a toothache. If you can change your attitude towards it, you can reduce the pain. There is a residue of painful sensation which can't be eliminated in that way, but your attitude towards it is more positive. Some people say that they can even enjoy the pain without it ceasing to be pain just because their mental state is so emotionally positive.

I did have a friend once in Bombay, who had his teeth out without anaesthetic, and he said he just concentrated on the sensation of pain. It wasn't so bad. He said the dentist was in a terrible state. (Roars of laughter) He was quite all right.

Paula: It does seem to come down to concentration though, this attitude to pain.

S: Well, concentration in two senses. Well, I mean this friend of mine concentrated on the pain, but it is possible according to the Buddha and other teachers, that one can rise to a higher level of consciousness, that is to say, rise to the rupa loka where sense consciousness doesn't exist and therefore, where you are no longer registering either pleasurable or painful physical sensations. But that's a different thing.

Vajrasuri: Another aspect of physical pain, is your fear of it and your reaction against it, and that adds to the physical pain, and if you can let that go, just become not attached to the pain, it does lessen.

S: There is another point also, that when you're in a very intense mental state or emotional state, even quite mundane, even unskilful, physical pain is not felt. For instance, in things like boxing matches, football matches, even in a war, when people are wounded, they don't feel the wound at the time because they're so involved, so identified with their emotional state. They're experiencing that so powerfully, the experience of the physical pain just doesn't register. They only start feeling it afterwards when the emotional state has died down. Sometimes when you're in a very ecstatic state, maybe playing a musical instrument or

something like that, or dancing, you may just get an accidental cut or bruise, but you don't notice it because the ecstatic state is so strong. You're so wrapped up in it. [43] However, when you come down a few degrees, as it were, then you realize it's hurting.

Glynis Brown: Even when you stub your toe, there seems to be that split second in which you think this is going to hurt. (Laughter) And then it does.

S: Well sometimes, if you're convinced it's going to hurt, it hurts, I'm sorry to say.

Rosie Ong: I'm just wondering, that if you have a body, even an Enlightened person for example has a body, then do they, does it mean that all the implications of having a body ...

S: Well, what does one mean by implications? If it is a question of pleasurable or painful bodily sensations, well, yes, they experience those. When there is a beautiful soft breeze, they experience it as pleasurable. If fire comes too close to the skin, well, they experience it as painful.

Rosie: I was wondering how far biological instincts are, sort of biological instincts carried over in the physical body?

S: Well, presumably, the Enlightened person will still experience biological functioning. Breathing is a biological function, but would not give rise to any unskilful mental state, based upon that functioning.

Maybe one has to distinguish quite clearly between the cause process and the reaction process. The body itself is a sort of crystallized reaction process, the result of previous karma, but how you use it, that depends on the present mental state, which may be positive or it may be negative. You can use all the senses in a skilful way or an unskilful way.

Rosie: Because one talks of say, maternal instincts or sexual instinct for example.

S: Well, then one has to distinguish carefully the extent to which they are purely reactive - when I say 'reactive', I mean they are the resultant of previous karmas - and the extent to which they are actual karmas in the present. Do you see what I mean? You may have a sort of tendency which is a resultant, coming over from previous lives which is the result of karma. Well that itself is not anything karmic, but if on the basis of that, you, as it were, develop a mental attitude, [44] if you take any action, well then to that extent you are creating fresh karma either skilful or unskilful.

Rosie: So you don't have to act?

S: Well, yes. You have first of all have to distinguish what is cause process and what is action process. Do you see what I mean? If you look at the nidana chain, you see that there is a cause process which is a karmic process. And then there are the results or the resultants which are set up - resultant acts and which you experience as it were, passively, as the physical body. You don't at this instant will the physical body. The physical body is the result of karmas previously performed.

So, associated with the physical body, there are various functionings which are resultants, but

the question of skilful or unskilful comes in when in dependence on or with these functionings as objects, you set up fresh skilful or unskilful mental states. It may sometimes be difficult to see where the cause process ends and the effect process begins, or vice versa - the one as it were, shading off into the other.

But the distinction is there. In other words, sometimes it's difficult to tell whether you're acting or whether you're suffering. Suffering in the sense, not in the usual sense of the term but in a sense of experiencing. Sometimes you should ask yourself "Am I doing or Am I suffering?" We don't always distinguish these things. Do you see what I mean? Sometimes one might say, "I had to do something". You don't mean you had to do it. You weren't passive in respect of that action. You decided to do it. But you don't want to admit the fact, because you don't want to take responsibility perhaps. Again this is one of the functions of awareness.

Maybe we should go into this a little bit before we close. There is this very sort of subtle point in the nidana chain, where the cause process of the present passes over into the action process of the present. You are familiar with this, aren't you? That is to say, when in the terms of the nidana chain itself, where vedana, where sensation, especially pleasurable sensation, give rise to craving. So it's very important that one should be able to see this happening.

Pleasurable sensation is ethically neutral, karmically neutral, but what is not karmically neutral is your reaction to it. This may be skilful or it may be unskilful. Do you see what I mean? But sometimes you can't quite see the one passing over into the other, they're sort of confused. Supposing for instance, well, let's say someone offers you a chocolate. Let's say you take the chocolate, [45] you accept the chocolate, let's say you put it into your mouth. You could say that so far all is, well no, maybe I'm going too quickly! Let's say that you're just sitting there. Someone offers you a chocolate. What happens then? You put out your hand and you accept it. You could say that you haven't really departed from your - what shall we call it? - your Karma process state. You're sitting there because of karmas performed in the past. You are not setting up any volitions in the present. You've got your physical body as a result of karmas performed in the past, so this [is] all result process. So you're offered a chocolate. All right. You just accept it. You haven't necessarily moved out of that result process, perhaps. Maybe the stretching out of the hand is just mechanical, it's just a reflex, without any karmically significant mental state being present. You could say that. You accept the chocolate. You put it into your mouth. You start sucking it, There is a pleasurable sensation. Well, you could say that pleasurable sensation is still part of the result process, coming from the past, because it's on account of actions performed in the past. You've got a physical body equipped with sense organs which do experience pleasure and pain. So far so good. This is all result process.

But as you sort of masticate that sweet, feelings of craving may start arising in the form of well, "I'd like another one. Maybe I could finish the whole box!" (Laughter) So actual craving arises. So do you see the distinction? There's result process and then karma process. In dependence upon vedana arises trsna. Now, I, for instance, said, when you were offered the chocolate, you are still in the result process. You weren't initiating any karma. But maybe it wasn't quite like that. Maybe a very subtle craving was present which led you to stretch out your hand. Maybe it wasn't purely reflexive. But you see it's very difficult to see exactly where the one process passes over into the other. That's the point. At which point did you actually start experiencing trsna, craving? At which point?

Was it simply when you rolled the sweet round in your mouth two or three times? Or was it even earlier on, when you anticipated the pleasurable sensation, and the anticipation of the sensation itself led to the arising of the feeling of greed? Was it then perhaps? So even though there is a clear distinction to be made, between the cause process on the one hand and the effect process on the others, the karma process and the result process, it's not always easy to detect the exact point at which the one changes into the other. And that means, it's very dangerous, because the one can change into the other without your knowing it, without your being aware of it, therefore, [46] you have to be very aware, and be able to detect the precise point where the effect process passes over into the cause process.

Dhammadinna: Doesn't that depend on your knowing yourself very well because it could be the first time that anybody had ever offered you a chocolate, in which case, it maybe it would be physiological. The sugar would do it, cause you to want another one. But if you know your chocolate has that effect on you, well would think about it earlier if you wanted to break the ...

S: Yes. Well, you'd be, all sorts of danger signals would start flashing based on your previous experience and knowledge of yourself. But even that may not be enough, because you may ignore those signals.

Dhammadinna: You may like chocolate. (Laughing)

S: So this all points to the necessity of a very close awareness, so you can see the very point at which one process passes into the other, where you pass from being, as it were, passive to being active. And that's where these biological instincts come in, also because in their case, one might say it's especially difficult to see where the result process of the past ends and the action process of the present begins. It's sort of blurred, so you have to keep a very careful watch. You know, there may be an upsurge of maternal instinct. Well is this just a psychological reflex or physical sense organs or is it the actual present initiation of a process of willing? Sometimes it may be very difficult to sort out the one from the other. Sometimes one only knows in the case say, of any action process, one only knows that it is actually arisen, the result process has passed over into action process, only when the action process itself is considerably advanced. It's very difficult sometimes to detect it at the very beginning.

And again, this is why awareness is so necessary, and also this is why, it is important to try to slow things down. Awareness in any case slows things down, so you can watch, you can see these things. There's the result process steadily going on and you can just watch it. The result process transforms into action process, you can see or ideally you can see a sort of gap. You can see the result process going on, whatever it is. Then stop, and then you can see action process starting up. But usually, you see, one follows on the other immediately. You don't see exactly where one ends and the other begins. In a way there is no ending and no beginning. It's virtually [47] continuous and that's very dangerous, because you don't really know what's happening and that means you can't be in control of what's happening.

Dhammadinna: You don't have one thing going on at a time anyway, do you?

S: No, right.

Dhammadinna: You've got a multidimensional process. You're not exactly looking for one gap, in one linear system. You're looking for these gaps in a multidimensional ...

S: But this is also why it's sometimes helpful to simplify your life. This is what happens when you're on solitary retreat. You've got only a few, sort of, lines of conditionality going on. There are just a few lines to watch, as it were. Well, food is one of them. Your response to the weather is another. Just three or four of these instead of hundreds as perhaps maybe the case when you're living your ordinary life.

Anjali: What were the two things, Bhante, that you said psychologically as a result of biological functions, after then?

S: Yes, a process of willing starts up as distinct from a process of passive experience.

Anjali: One's more active ...

S: No, what I said was, the whole process up to the pleasurable experience, the pleasurable sensation is result process. But action process, or the process of willing, starts up when there is an actual reaction to your experience and that can be either positive or negative, skilful or unskilful. But the sensation of pleasure is karmically neutral. The question of karmically skilful or unskilful arises only when there is action, willed action, based upon that, that pleasurable sensation but the pleasurable sensation itself is resultant. It is not in itself karmically significant. Do you see what I mean?

Marion Monas: Are unpleasant sensations, physical sensations similarly karmically neutral?

S: Yes. In themselves, yes. It's only when they give rise to, [48] for instance, feelings of resentment or anger that an element of unskilfulness enters into the situation. I make this point in a way quite strongly because in the West and still in very many peoples' minds there's the impression that pleasure is somehow sinful. Whereas the Buddhist point of view quite technically is that pleasure is karmically without significance because it is a resultant. Because it is the result simply of sense organs coming into contact with sense objects. It only becomes or the experience only becomes unskilful when the experience of pleasure is made a basis for craving. Because in the case of most people, pleasure, the sensation of pleasure, does give rise to craving and therefore, one has to be very careful when one finds oneself in pleasurable situations. But pleasure itself is not karmically unskilful. One has to insist on that point.

Marion: Why did you just distinguish between the fact it was physical as opposed to psychological or ...

S: Ah, because you can experience pleasurable, you can experience painful sensations just because you have a body. But painful mental sensation depends upon your actually involving yourself in unskilful mental states.

Marion: Do you have to do that, if it isn't necessarily karmically neutral?

S: Yes. (pause) In so far as the present life is concerned, I mean, on the pleasure plane or on the mental level; it depends upon present actions, whether skilful or unskilful. (Pause)

Anyway, is that any clearer now? I hope I haven't made it more confused. Anyway this has all arisen out of "but if you think that this will all disperse by itself, you should remember that

samsara is notorious for being without end" . You have to make an effort. And this is where the onus is on skilful action comes in. You have not to react, not to respond, in other words be creative (as a human being?)

Vajrasuri: It seems to me as though the best pleasure or joy or happiness comes about through not anything, not any reaction, not any object or not any event. Just surfaces. It's the one that just happens through the senses.

S: Well, the fact that you are momentarily without craving is a pleasurable experience because craving is a source of such unrest and torment, one might say, that just to be free from it. It's such a [49] relief that you experience that relief as very pleasurable. Maybe that's something that one will, under normal conditions, run through any actual spiritual life positively pursued. It's something that normally one experiences only as one gets older and one realizes that one doesn't have to run after the things that one used to run after. One doesn't have to bother about career and so on. You can just sit back, as it were, and enjoy life, But if one is actually pursuing a spiritual path, one experiences that sort of mental state, has that sort of mental attitude, in a much more intense form because it's much more conscious, much more aware and in a way more deliberate.

The you realize you can be happy without doing anything. All you have to do is sit down on or even doing it standing up and just be quite happy. (Laughter) Happiness doesn't depend on chasing after this and grabbing that, and making sure you've got something else. No, it's not like that at all, though that's the way we tend to think, especially when we're young. It's not that you can't see through it all when you're young, but perhaps you're less likely to, other factors being equal.

Vajrasuri: It almost seems as though you're really quite afraid of the big spaces, and you try to join things into those spaces; bring about actions.

S: Well, perhaps one is just; one doesn't have sufficient confidence in one's own inner resources. You're not really convinced that if you don't do anything, if you don't pop a chocolate into your mouth, or don't put a record on, or don't pick up a book or don't find an amusing companion, that you can still just be without all these things and be completely happy; without even thinking of anything. Just by drawing on one's inner resources. Again this is why, one of the reasons why, solitary retreats are so good. You have to fall back on inner resources. It's as simple as that. You just realize your own inner riches. You don't need music, you don't need records, you don't need books, you don't need people, at least for a short while. You can draw on something from within. As long as you're surrounded by these things, well, the tendency is to depend on them. You don't give yourself a chance not to depend on them.

I think it's a bit of a revelation to some people, that they can get along, be very happy without their usual sources of happiness, or alleged sources of happiness. And again, this resembles the 'after death' state when your physical body is taken away from you. But one finds that one can experience happiness. But according to the Tibetan Book of the Dead, your happiness is so great you can't bear it. [50] You have to flee back into a physical body which will screen you from that overwhelming happiness and just filter it through in little bits and pieces, in drops. Anyway, perhaps we'd better leave it there for this morning, We've covered really quite fundamental material, that really one needs to get very firmly in mind. Perhaps from

tomorrow, we can go a little more quickly.

Also I suggest you go through Guenther's notes carefully - the notes to what we've read today. They aren't always quite relevant but they are generally quite useful and if you haven't done so, go through the introduction to the book, by yourselves ... Well, we'll carry on tomorrow then.

(End of Tape 2)

[51]

S: Would someone like to read paragraph three? - that's the rest of the page:

Rosie O: "You may further argue, since the status of Samsara is bewilderment, great misery, endless duration and the absence of the possibility of being liberated by itself, what kind of Enlightenment have people striven to attain since time immemorial and what is the use of such striving. The answer falls under the following heads:

Motive, working basis, contributory cause,

Method, result and ensuing activity ...

These are the six general indicators of unsurpassable Enlightenment

That judicious men should know."

S: Right. "You may further argue, since the status of Samsara is bewilderment", that is to say, confusion - Moha - "great misery, endless duration and the absence of the possibility of being liberated by itself"; that is to say if samsara is left to its own devices so to speak, it will simply go on and on. And it is not that if Samsara is left to its own devices, it will automatically after a certain period of time start developing or evolving. No. An effort has to be made. There has to be a sort of intervention. But "what kind of Enlightenment have people striven to attain since time immemorial and what is the use of such striving? The answer falls under the following heads:" And these heads are of course, are the heads under which Gampopa himself is going to discuss the whole subject and which form the main divisions of the book. So we don't need to go into these in detail. We are only concerned with the first one, 'Motive', which is the subject matter of this particular chapter with which we are concerned. So the heads are: "Motive, working basis, contributory cause, method, result, and ensuing activity. These are the six general indicators of unsurpassable Enlightenment that judicious men should know."

So as I've said we're concerned just with the first of these: Motive. Anyway, let's see just briefly the following two paragraphs, what these are in general before we go on to our own topic, the topic of the second chapter which is 'The Motive'. Anyone like to read that next paragraph:

Megha: "In other words, you should know the motive which is unsurpassable Enlightenment; the individual which is the working basis for attaining that Enlightenment; the contributory cause urging the latter to attain it; the method and result of such attainment and the resulting Buddha-activity".

S: From this it is clear that the headings are not just arbitrary, they are interconnected. There is a logical connection, in fact, between them.

[52]

First of all, the Motive, with which we are going to be dealing with in the present chapter is 'unsurpassable Enlightenment' itself. That is to say, it is the individual who aims at that Enlightenment. And then there are various contributory causes. Then there is the 'method', the 'result of such attainment and the resulting Buddha-activity'. So in this way, we're just given a brief survey of the subject matter, the structure of this book, the interconnection of the different topics. This one can see in detail only as one goes through the whole book, which of course we won't be doing on this occasion.

All right, let's go on to that next section then:

Paula: "These topics will be introduced in their proper sequence by the headings:

- a) The motive is Tathagatagarbha.
- b) The working basis is the most precious human body;
- c) The contributory cause are spiritual friends;
- d) The method are the instructions of spiritual friends;
- e) The result is Sambuddhakaya; and
- f) The activity is working for the benefit of others without preconceived ideas.

S: So here that structure becomes more clear - that the motive for one's quest to Enlightenment is the Tathagatagarbha. This is what we will be going into in this chapter; and "the working basis is the most precious human body". "The contributory cause are spiritual friends", then "the method are the instructions of spiritual friends" and "the result is Sambuddhakaya" - the attainment of an Enlightened Buddha personality, so to speak, and the activity consequent upon the attainment of the Sambuddhakaya is the activity which is "working for the benefit of others without preconceived ideas".

"And so far, these topics have been mentioned as constituting the body of doctrine. Now they will be explained in detail as the limbs of that body." That is to say, one by one.

So we are concerned with the first of those six, that is to say, 'the motive' which is Tathagatagarbha. Would someone like to read the whole of that first paragraph, including that quotation, and then we can discuss it in detail:

Debbie S:

"a) The first has been introduced by the words "The motive is Tathagatagarbha",

However if you wonder whether dejected people like ourselves will ever attain by our own exertions this unsurpassable Enlightenment liberating ourselves from Samsara which is by nature bewilderment, you may be reassured by remembering that if Enlightenment can be won [53] by hard work, it must be within our reach; for in all beings like ourselves the Buddha-motive, Tathagatagarbha, is present. This is affirmed in the Samadhirajasutra:

Tathagatagarbha embraces and permeates all beings.
In the Mahaparinirvanasutra:

All being are endowed with Tathagatagarbha.

In the Mahaparinirvanasutra:

Just as butter exists permeating milk, so does Tathagatagarbha permeate all beings.

And in the Mahayana-Sutralankara:

Tathata, which becomes purified, although it is in itself undifferentiated in and for all beings, Is Buddhahood; because of it all sentient beings are endowed with its essence."

S: This is quite important and not very easy to understand. Gampopa says at the beginning of paragraph: "You may further argue, since the status of Samsara is bewilderment, great misery, endless duration and the absence of the possibility of being liberated by itself, what kind of Enlightenment have people striven to attain since time immemorial, etc."

So here we are as it were, part and parcel of the Samsara. That is to say, we are overcome by bewilderment, overcome by confusion, we suffer various kinds of misery and that process is indefinitely prolonged. You see what I mean? And there's no possibility, there's no hope of Samsara, or of life itself even as part of that Samsara, apparently, of ever leading to anything except the Samsara. After all, bewilderment can only lead to bewilderment; confusion can only lead to confusion. So it's not only a question of, well, how do we ever get out of this state of affairs but how do we ever even think of getting out of it? It's as though if we look at ourselves, if we look into our own minds, more or less, there's just confusion upon confusion resulting in suffering upon suffering.

So how does anybody ever get out? How is it that there is such a thing as the possibility of Enlightenment at all? It would seem to be that we're involved in a quite hopeless situation, so therefore, Gampopa says at the beginning of this later paragraph: "However, if you wonder whether dejected people like ourselves will ever attain by our own exertions, etc." "Dejected people" - I don't know a literal rendering of Tibetan 'dejected' is, but what does it suggest? That people are dejected, that we are dejected?

Anjali: Not much hope.

S: Not much hope. So why is there not much hope? Because we can't really see any prospect except that of, as I've said, of confusion upon confusion, suffering upon suffering. So naturally you are dejected. [54] You're fully involved; you're completely involved and you can't apparently see any way out or not even any way out. There isn't any conception perhaps of anything on the other side of Samsara so to speak. There's no where that you can have a way out to even. There's nothing but Samsara.

Don't you think this is very much the position of many people today? When there's no, to use that term, 'religious faith' of any kind - when one hasn't any awareness of any sort of transcendental dimension to existence, much less still of any way or path leading to it, any opening in that direction. One cannot but be dejected, so to speak, if one has any imagination at all.

So, "however, if you wonder whether dejected people like ourselves will ever attain by our own exertions this unsurpassable Enlightenment" because it can't be attained by means of the automatic process of the Samsara - "liberating ourselves from Samsara which is by nature bewilderment, you may be reassured by remembering that if Enlightenment can be won by hard work, it must be within our reach".

Why do you think that there is this sort of proviso, that if Enlightenment can be won by hard work? What gives one the suspicion that maybe Enlightenment can be even won by hard work? Why do you have any sort of grounds for believing, or how do you come to have grounds for believing that this is in fact a possibility? For instance, you've got perhaps the abstract idea of Enlightenment, a liberation from Samsara, but you don't see that Samsara itself, is going to, after a while, start of its own accord, so to speak, heading in the direction of Enlightenment. No, that is a contradiction in terms. So how do you have the idea at all? Where do you get it from - that Enlightenment can be won by hard work?

Voice: (Unclear) Enlightened.

S: By seeing, hearing, or reading about Enlightened beings. That is to say, your confidence has a certain empirical basis. It is as though history does tell one that there are human beings who seem to have risen above the Samsara; who seem to have gone beyond it, who seem to have actually realized this ideal of Enlightenment. But how have they done it? As far as one can see? They've done it only by means of hard work. So therefore it says: "If Enlightenment can be won by hard work, it must be within our reach; for in all beings like ourselves the Buddha-motive, Tathagatagarbha, is present". So what is the sort of line of argument here? [55]

Vajrapushpa: Enlightened beings were ordinary human beings just as we are.

S: Yes, the Enlightened beings were ordinary beings to begin with, like ourselves and they became Enlightened human beings by virtue of the effort that they made. So that being the case, and we definitely being human beings - there seems to be no doubt about that - we must have the same capacity, so that if we make the same effort, we can achieve the same goal. Do you think this is an actual motive for people? Do people think like this? Do people's minds work in this sort of way, do you think? Do they feel this is a sort of encouragement? Is this the way that they reason, or is this the way you reason, or have reasoned? Or are there other ways of reasoning? I mean there is another way of reasoning which leads to another conclusion other than the Buddhist one, which we should perhaps, or one should at least consider before rejecting - what is that?

Voice: A more nihilistic one.

S: Yes, well there is that. I wasn't thinking of that, but there is that. I did refer to it a little while ago, when I said that a lot of people now-a-days don't see any way out - for that is an option: "Well, there is no way out, there's just the Samsara!". There is that possibility. You can think in that way.

Jenny: Or that we need Divine help.

S: Ah, yes. That's the other option. That we need Divine help. So why does one not opt for that option. I mean many people feel that the world is so bad, the Samsara is of such a nature that their only hope for us is for some Divine Saviour, you know, to come down into this world. I mean this is not the Christian view, this is the Hindu view: that when things become too bad, when Dharma deteriorates, then God/Vishnu takes another avatara, descends again, incarnates again as we might say, in Western terminology; though avatara is not quite the same thing as incarnation. Anyway, there is a descent, there is a manifestation of some Divine

power who puts everything right, who saves everybody. Or else God sends a messenger, a prophet. So why does one not wish to accept that option? It's a very powerful one.

Marion: It doesn't actually arise very often. (Laughter)

Vajrapushpa: it comes in two weeks! (Laughter)

[56]

Voice: ... Very short term solution that doesn't actually work.

S: It doesn't actually work. No. In what sense does it not actually work?

Voice: ... get Enlightened.

S: Well, this particular attitude doesn't make use of the concept of Enlightenment. It's as though God comes on, or some other personality and sort of props things up for a while. And when the prop is removed of course, well, they collapse, again.

So it's as though in this sort of way of thinking, there is no very clear understanding of the nature of the spiritual life itself. Do you see what I mean? All right, supposing for the sake of argument, supposing the world is in a very bad way. Well, we say the world is in a very bad way - what does that really mean? It means that individuals are in a very bad way and for individuals not to be in a very bad way what must happen?

Voices: Got to change ...

S: They've got to change. But can there be change as it were, by force? Can there be change, as it were, from the outside? Supposing in 6 weeks time, or 2 months time, this Saviour that's been announced by way of a full page announcement in the Times (Laughter) - but supposing that he does come, well supposing. Supposing he does broadcast as it's been said he's going to broadcast. Well, what do you think would be people's reactions? Say ordinary people; even supposing that they did believe it was God, or that it was Jesus and that they ought to listen to him. Would they really want to listen to him, do you think? What would be their attitude? What would be their predominant feeling, do you think?

Voice: Cynicism?

S: No, I don't think it would be cynicism. Not if they felt it was really God, or really Jesus or some Divine power, you know, coming down to them, telling them what to do. What would be.

Annie F: A sense of relief I suppose, not to have to do anything, any more.

: Fear? {57}

S: I think it would be fear, because you wouldn't really be changed, you'd still want to go on doing all the things that you previously wanted to do, but here was God, Jesus, telling you not to do those things. So you sort of believed it was God, sort of believed it was Jesus, so, perhaps out of fear you might give up doing those things for a while, but as soon as he'd gone

away, what would happen? Well, you'd gradually forget, and you'd gradually go back into your old ways. And he'd have to come again and frighten you again. (Laughter) So what else could happen but that?

So therefore, a Saviour coming from outside to the undeveloped individual cannot but be perceived as a sort of authority, power. And you may submit to that power out of fear for a while, but when the threat is removed, you go back to your old ways. Then, after all this is actually what we see happening. What do Christians believe? What are they supposed to believe? They are supposed to believe that God himself came down to Earth, was born of the Virgin, was crucified, and buried and ascended into Heaven and is going to come again and judge them and if he finds that they haven't been following his instructions he's going to send them to Hell forever and ever and ever. But does that make Christians any better than other people? No, if you take the strictest sort of Christian - that is to say, the Catholics.

It's been found say, in this country recently that the Catholics contribute a higher percentage of criminals to the criminal population in prison than any other denomination or non-denomination. So how is this? So fear doesn't really work. All right, it works for a very short period of time. If you really want to change people then you can't do it in this way. If you really want people to grow and develop, you can't do it in this way.

The only way that people can develop, the only way that they can improve is by wanting to - by being convinced that they can. And being convinced that they can change themselves because the nature of change and transformation of the individual is such that it cannot be brought about by external means, as it were, by force. It can be brought about only by you yourself, because that is what you want to do. And before you can want to do it you must believe that it is possible or be convinced that it is possible. And how can you be convinced that it is possible except by seeing or believing or being convinced that other human beings before you, have done it?

Unless, you are a very exceptional person - this is in a way what makes the Buddha such an exceptional person because in his time no body else had done it. There were no exemplars. He had to find his own way. He had to go entirely by, you know, the force of his own personal [58] conviction, without that being borne out by anybody with whom he was in actual contact. But for the majority of people wanting to develop, wanting to evolve themselves, wanting to get out of the Samsara, so to speak, it is highly encouraging to find that there are people who have done it. In fact there are many people who have done it. You can read their life stories and you can see exactly how they did it and you can see that energy and effort were needed. So you can prove that if I put in the task, the same energy and effort that they did, I can develop in the same way. I, too, can become a true individual; I, too can become Enlightened.

So really that is the only viable option, and it's quite a sensible one in a way, because it has a sort of empirical basis, that if you know, read autobiographies and some of these sort of people, you can see, yes, they did change, they did develop, they did grow. And you're a human being just as they were, so you can do better no doubt than you are doing at present, if you make the effort. You can go in the same sort of general direction that they could have been in.

But again, we haven't really come to the point - this is all just preliminary, just introduction.

No, we haven't got anywhere near the real point yet.: "For in all beings like ourselves, the Buddha motive, the Tathagatagarbha is present". And this introduces a rather difficult concept, a rather tricky concept. There are all sorts of linguistic difficulties here; we'll go into these shortly.

All right, here you've read the life stories for instance, of people who did gain Enlightenment; you're convinced that in as much as they were human beings and you are also a human being that you can achieve whatever they achieved. But what does that suggest? What does that imply - that you are able to gain Enlightenment? That a human being is able to gain Enlightenment despite being so immersed in bewilderment and confusion and misery and so on. What does it suggest?

Dhammadinna: That you've got some reflection of that within yourself, some seed.

S: Yes. Isn't that what it suggests? That you may not be able to see it. As far as you can see you're nothing but a mass of bewilderment, and confusion - not to say misery, not to say dejection (Laughter). But for it to be at all possible for you eventually to become Enlightened or to grow at all must there not be some little seed already which is there? Do you see what I mean? And this seed is called the 'Tathagatagarbha' which literally means the 'womb' or 'matrix of the Tathagatas'. 'Tathagata' meaning of course, the Buddha or rather "Buddhahood". [59] It can't really be translated as 'seed'. One can think of that potential, let us say, as a seed, but that is not actually the Buddhist terminology. 'Seed' would be 'Bija'. It says 'Garbha' which is 'womb'.

It means that every human being is a 'Garbha', a 'womb' for Buddhahood. That is to say, within every human being, every human individual, Enlightenment can grow. The human personality, as it were, the human psycho physical organism is a sort of matrix, a womb even, within which Enlightenment can grow and develop. That's not quite the same thing as saying that there's a seed there, but it amounts to the same thing, obviously.

But of course there are various difficulties. Let's discuss it in terms of a seed because this is more, as it were, straightforward. Well, what is this seed? How did it get there? How is one to think of it? A seed suggests something relatively static, hidden under layers and layers of mud or earth, anyway and then gradually sprouting. But is it actually like that?

Voice: It's something (inaudible)

S: But that makes it sort of subject to time and makes it a part of the Samsaric process whereas by very definition it is something other. Can you literally bring from the path, something which is transcendental therefore time-transcending?

Megha: It's almost as though inside you, you've got something rocking about, vibrating, that when certain conditions are right, it can start to grow up.

S: Yes. But the difficulty about this concept from traditional Buddhism view is that it does seem to come perilously near the conception of Atman - an unchanging soul or self which is your real or your true self. Of course, Buddhists rightly see that as a rather dangerous sort of notion which goes against the whole idea of individual development.

I mean, in Hinduism for instance, they think in terms of an unchanging self which is at the core of your being so that all you have to do is just strip off the outer cover or coverings and there you are! Your true self is revealed in its immaculate glory!

Buddhists traditionally, certainly early Buddhists and certainly the Buddha didn't think in that sort of way. Why do you think they didn't think in that sort of way? What did they see wrong in thinking in that sort of way?

[60]

Rosie A: Because then you've got some view of yourself that is fixed.

S: Some view of yourself that is fixed. Yes, well, if that seed is already there, if Buddhahood is already there and it's just a question of stripping off the veils, well, in some ways you are Buddha already. If you are not careful, you can sort of misunderstand that and you can, as it were, say: "Well, fine! I'm Enlightened already! Buddhahood is already there underneath. Well, I don't really need to do very much, perhaps, no need to do anything at all". And one does sometimes find this sort of attitude among some philosophical or pseudo philosophical Hindus - Vedantins today in India.

There are many teachers who will say, "Well, you are that. You are already absolute perfection and all the rest of it. All you have to do, is just remove the veil of illusion that prevents you realizing that, that is what you already are." But this does seem to be a sort of dangerous attitude. You are that already. Well, in a sense you may be that out of time, but if you that already, it suggests that you or as your present personality are already that. It may well inhibit your making any effort even to unveil that which you supposedly are. You may suffer from an intoxication almost - well, you are that already! There's no need for you to do anything. All you have to do, ought to do is to realize that, which makes it sound very simple, much more simple than it really is.

So Buddhism on the whole tends to avoid this sort of static language, this static sort of conception. It doesn't speak in terms on the whole of you being already being Buddha: all you have to do is wake up to the fact. Some Zen teachers do sometimes speak in this sort of way. But I think even in that case it's rather misleading.

"You are Buddha. All you've got to do is realize that". No. That can be very misleading. It's very difficult really to feel that you are Buddha. It's perhaps much more realistic to think in terms, perhaps, one day becoming Buddha, if you make a sufficient effort.

Rosie A: Is the seed more like a faculty almost?

S: Well, I don't think that helps at all, if it's something that we already actually have. This is the whole point of the argument, in a way, the objection. To conceive of it as something that is already there, rather than something that needs to be developed; something that needs to be uncovered, instead of something that needs to be actually brought into existence.

But let's go on to this question of linguistic difficulties, [61] because this is quite important. In a way, this might be at the root of the matter. Let's give a very simple example. Supposing you want to learn a language. Well suppose you do actually learn a new language. Suppose you learn German. So one could say, could one not, that even when you did not know

German, and had not learnt German, you had the capacity to learn German? Yes? You had the potentiality to learn German. Therefore', the knowledge of German was potentially present within you. You see what I mean? Therefore, actually you know German, but you don't know that fact, you don't realize it. (Laughter) But actually you know German. But is that really a very helpful way of looking at it? Can you really say here and now actually you know German? Because if you made the effort you could learn German? Is it not misleading to speak in that sort of way? But it suggests in some obscure manner that knowledge is already present when in fact it isn't. It is something to be developed. So if one, as it were, reifies the language of potentiality, then one gets concepts like 'seed' and even 'Tathagatadhātu' or 'Tathagatagarbha' (if one is interested). Do you see what I mean? One can use them as poetic figures of speech, that's all right. You can speak of the seed, and the seed sprouting, shooting and blossoming, but if you take it too literally as a sort of metaphysical concept, then you may get into difficulties.

So early Buddhism, and the basic Buddhist tradition contents itself with speaking simply in terms of, well, not even potentiality in the sense of something being actually present, but sort of hidden or covered. It speaks in terms of effort. That if you make the effort, then you can achieve such and such state. It doesn't say that that state or that realization is already there, and all you have to do is uncover it or wake up to the fact that it is there. It regards this as a rather misleading, not to say, confusing way of thinking. So concepts like this of the Tathagatagarbha are all right if we take them as symbols, if we take them as figures of speech, but if we try and interpret them metaphysically then we may find ourselves in difficulties. You get the point?

Marion: By calling it a developing consciousness, would it be metaphysical again?

S: Well, provided you know, one is clear, that when one speaks of a developing consciousness, that you are not positing a consciousness which persists as it were, unchanged, and the development so to speak, happens to it externally. That the consciousness itself is identical with the actual process of development of consciousness; the distinction [62] is purely verbal, is purely grammatical. There's no unchanging subject of that process. If you understand that, well fair enough, speak in that way.

Rosie O: Is the other popular rendering of Tathagatagarbha, Buddha nature?

S: No, not quite. In Sanskrit that would be Buddhatva(?) - Buddha nature but yes, that can be a similar source of similar confusion. That you have the Buddha nature, that is highly abstract metaphysical language. What one should really say, perhaps is that, you, if you make the effort can become a Buddha. But to say that therefore, that you here and now have the Buddha-nature, that is a highly metaphysical way of putting things which could be open to misinterpretation or misunderstanding.

So Buddhism on the whole, adopts this more sort of dynamic approach or more empirical approach, even one can say, and this is in line with its basic philosophy of 'in dependence upon A, B arises'. Not that B is somehow hidden away behind A or is the essence of A, or is like a seed in A. It simply says 'in dependence upon A, B arises.' In dependence upon your effort as a human being, as an individual human being, higher states of consciousness arise. In dependence upon those states of consciousness, there arises Insight, in dependence upon Insight there arises Enlightenment. It doesn't find it necessary to speak that sort of substantial

pseudo metaphysical language of 'you are really that' all the time. Do you see the point? Because it doesn't really add anything to our knowledge to say that you here and now are Buddha, because if you make the effort you would be able to become Buddha. In a way, it confuses the issue.

Rosie O: If you transpose on to the transcendental plane, then you could say that we are all Buddha, can't you? If you change the time ...

S: Well, one could in a manner of speaking say that outside time, after all, attainment and making an effort are all outside time, yes, you're all Buddhas or we're all Buddhas, but as a matter of fact we're not outside time, we're in time. So being within time, it is improper that we should speak of ourselves in that way.

Kay: But we don't have to come in time to help us to become Buddha, by being in this sphere, in this sort of human body, to contact those, well, the energy we can contact to become Buddhas - like this energy in us in this time we can actually through this (corm?) and being in this kind of energy, we can contact the Higher Buddha energies.

I'm not sure how to put it.

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S: Ah, but we don't even need to think in that way. We mustn't think of these things as actually existing in a sort of metaphysical way, before we actually develop them.

Kay: In ourselves.

S: Mmm. I mean, just as I gave the example of learning German, it isn't as though something called knowledge of German exists as a metaphysical entity somewhere abstractly, (Laughter) before any individual human being actually learns such things. Do you see what I mean? But perhaps, well, as I said at the beginning, a sort of difficulty of language itself that we can think in this sort of way. In a way, it's a misuse of language perhaps that we think or speak in this sort of way.

In other words, we are not justified in concluding, as it were, philosophically, that because we can realize something, within the process of time, realize something which we haven't experienced before, we cannot conclude from that, that before we realized it, it somehow existed, whether within ourselves or independently. Or perhaps we should simply say that it's unnecessary to think in that sort of way. We are going beyond our 'brief' as it were.

Dhammadinna: Aren't we concluding that Enlightenment as a state exists, otherwise we can't move towards it?

S: Well, we can certainly think of it in that way, but as it were, poetically, imaginatively. But are we justified in thinking like that, say, in strict philosophical terms?

(End of Side A)

S: ... Enlightenment, it doesn't really mean anything more than that we should eventually attain a state called Enlightenment. We cannot necessarily conclude from the original

statement that there is now actually a state of Enlightenment, towards which we are moving.

Rosie O: Putting it like that, makes it sound like a problem in physics or mathematics, moving from A to B.

S: Mmm, yes. This is not really what is happening at all. There isn't a sort of real, as it were, special moving thing. We can see where our language for it is metaphorical, but we don't always realize that. We treat this metaphorical language as though it was a real language. We think of Enlightenment as sort of out there and ourselves as [64] moving towards it, almost as through space. But this isn't really what happens at all.

Rosie O: But isn't that why the Buddha-nature concept was evolved, because people think of moving, so to react against this, they said it's an (independent?)

S: Well, if you take the time process too literally, well, maybe you need a space concept to counterbalance it, but, well in a sense, one might say from an ordinary common-sense point of view, why should you not take the time concept literally because you do experience that; you do experience change. You can actually make an effort and you can sort of conceive of the final goal of your effort, because you can conceive of it as actually present now; you could think of it as present now. But you are not justified in concluding from that, that it is metaphysically actually, as it were, present now and only needing to be realized, or only needing to have the veils removed.

So probably from a practical point of view, you are safe, you are on firm ground, just thinking in the way the Buddha himself seems to have thought: 'in dependence upon A, B arises. If I make such and such an effort, there will be such and such a result'. One doesn't really need to translate that into sort of abstract conceptual terms at all - to try to reify that possibility, that possibility of gaining Enlightenment as an actually existent thing here and now. Do you see the point?

: I suppose it comes down to what effect any teaching actually has on your practice.

S: Yes, right.

Vajrasuri: I like the idea of it being a womb. You're actually right where you are. You're incubating that through effort.

S: You are the womb.

Vajrasuri: You are the womb, and you're incubating it and bringing it about, standing right where you are; it's your own effort.

Vajrapushpa: Can you give birth to yourself, sort of immediately?

[65]

S: (Like a frog?) Perhaps the analogy can be pursued(after a while?) (Laughter)

Dhammadinna: To go back to the beginning of the discussion - if I can remember it - if you're just stuck in the Samsara, how do you, feel, have any feeling at all for something beyond that?

S: Ah, yes, to come back in a way to that point. Though, as I said, one is involved in confusion and nothing but confusion and experiences misery and nothing but misery - that is perhaps as overstatement, perhaps one is not absolutely, completely confused; maybe there is just a little tiny element of clarity - and that, if one uses the figure of speech, just as a figure of speech, one can speak of a seed, not as a metaphysical seed, you know planted from somewhere out of time ...

Dhammadinna: But if that clarity has had to arise on, 'in dependence upon something else', where does this come from? If you're stuck in a kind of reactive process? If Samsara is a reactive process and the spiral is a means of seeing beyond that, how do you ever get from one to the other? And why does awareness arise and what sort of awareness arises, if you're just stuck in the samsaric order?

S: Well, there is only one real answer to this - there is only one real answer to this which is that you cannot identify the consequences of this both spiritually and philosophically are very extensive. Perhaps even in traditional Buddhist teaching they've only been worked out partially, but the only real reply is that the human being doesn't belong, even the unenlightened or even the least Enlightened human being, does not belong only to the Samsaric order. Yes? That even the most reactive human being is not absolutely one hundred percent reactive.

Dhammadinna: That doesn't really answer the question, does it? It seems to be unanswerable in a way, doesn't it? Because we're back to there being a reflection of something else within the Samsara.

S: Yes, you see, let's take for instance, the teaching of the 'Awakening of Faith'. The text called "the Awakening of Faith" in the Mahayana, which we have only in Chinese and which purports to be a translation from Sanskrit and which is attributed to Asvagosha. This speaks of a reflection of, what shall we say, reflection of the transcendental in the mundane and speaks of a reflection of the mundane in the transcendental - speaks of a sort of mutual perfuming of the two. [66] Do you remember this? And this is an attempt to sort of get to grips with the same sort of problem, to state the issue and just solve it in a different sort of way; instead of speaking of a seed, it speaks of a reflection of, a perfuming, but in a way this doesn't help us very much doesn't help us very much more. (Laughter)

It amounts to the same thing, that as you said, if we are completely mundane, if we are completely immersed in the Samsara, well, actually we can never get out of it. So the fact that we can get out of it, means that we were never completely in it. That there was a sort of part of us, though language is rather inadequate (Laughter), a part of us, an aspect of us, which you know, was not involved in that and then one can take that little sort of particle almost, and just develop it and develop it and develop it until that becomes predominant in your experience, in our life, just as at present it is the confusion and the reactivity that is predominant. Do you see what I mean?

Anjali: But, Bhante, if you take the concept of the Higher Evolution that you come from something totally reactive and with no awareness, in dependence upon what, do you get that reflection?

Annie Murphy: Consciousness. Isn't it a quality of mind, Bhante, that you actually ... ?

S: Well, it poses the question, what is mind?

Annie Murphy: Yes. (Laughter)

S: You're really getting into deep water because, all right, yes, the higher evolution arises in dependence upon the lower evolution, but all right, let's just provisionally use the language of the seed, well, if human beings have got that seed, but what about animals? So if animals haven't got it, well and human beings have, even unenlightened beings, well, just at what point does it arise, so to speak?

So this is why I say that the implications are very extensive. The ramifications are very extensive, both for spiritual life and philosophy generally. But it does seem that, yes, though one can distinguish between the reactive process and the creative process, that is to say, there are certainly difficulties in the position that the unenlightened being is purely reactive, because if the unenlightened being is purely reactive, well, the transition from the unenlightened to the Enlightened stage will never be made.

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Linda: Couldn't you just possibly see it in terms of - if Nirvana actually exists, there has to be some glimmering of awareness in us. I mean, if there were only Samsara, then we would only be aware of Samsara?

S: Yes, or one might go a little further than that -actually the text does, that you could not even be dissatisfied with Samsara in the sense of being disillusioned with it or be disgruntled merely, unless there was 'something', as it were, within you which couldn't be satisfied except with something beyond Samsara. That is the cause of your discontent, even though you can't identify that's what it is that you want. It is that which makes you discontent.

But the thrust of the discussion has been that one mustn't reify that sort of desire, or that urge or discontent. One mustn't understand it as implying sort of some unchanging entity actually within you, even as a seed of a transcendental nature.

Rosie O: I can see now why they say 'sunyata, sunyata'.

S: Well, sunyata just indicates from one point of view, that the absence of any sort of solid element, anything which does not really and cannot change, any tying down to one particular position, one particular form of existence. That's why even the concept of 'seed' is unsatisfactory because it is static and it does do that to some extent. So what is at the heart of things, one could say, is not so much a seed, as an empty space, an unrestricted possibility, not a thing. An unrestricted possibility, hence you could say a 'garbha', a 'womb', an empty space. There is an element of non-restriction.

Marion: Could you see it as a propensity to change, and if everything has propensity to change then it has a propensity to develop (S: Yes), then therefore, sooner or later there is going to be an awareness which actually ...

S: There's a propensity to change. It can be a change of a reactive nature, it can be a change of a creative nature. One is not to think of that capacity for change as some sort of entity. It would be better - well more accurate perhaps to think of it or speak of it as some kind of

empty space, some kind of unrestrictedness, hence 'sunyata'.

Marion: Why can't you see it as an entity?

S: Well, then you restrict the future possibilities.

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Dhammadinna: An empty space is sort an entity too. (Laughter)

S: I only offer it as a more illuminating metaphor. (Laughter)

Dhammadinna: The other thing is to keep reminding oneself that you're being metaphorical. It seems to be levels of language that confuses - the confusion seems to come from trying to work from a dualistic framework, as something which ultimately isn't and also using different levels of language. It's something I've been thinking about for a long long time.

S: So what is the practical upshot?

Dhammadinna: You can grow.

S: Yes, you can grow.

Dhammadinna: But if it is a potentiality, then it doesn't automatically grow. You can say everyone's got a potential or an empty space, or whatever you like to call it, but it is not necessarily going to happen. There seems to be other factors leading to ...

S: Well, this is why you see, the author says 'the motive is the Tathagatagarbha'. 'The working place is the most precious human body.' 'The contributory cause is spiritual friends'.

Dhammadinna: So you need more than just the potential here. It's like it's got to [be] sparked off from other conditions obviously and not totally from within oneself. I mean, we're talking about spiritual friends and you are talking about something outside ...

S: Not that it's to be implanted, as it were, from some external source, but helped, and the spiritual friends obviously differ from God or say, from the Christ of tradition because they don't sort of threaten you. They just try to help and encourage you, discuss and point out what is the best thing for you to do. They don't sort of bludgeon you into spiritual development or bully you into spiritual development. That's a contradiction in terms.

Vajrasuri: That's what's so good about the Dharma: you stretch yourself into it. You don't have to back away from it. The facility of it is to broaden and stretch yourself into it.

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S: But to go back a moment to that issue we touched upon, that's to say, that if a human being can attain Enlightenment, then no human being can be regarded as so to speak, one hundred percent Samsaric. One of course, can't speak very literally, even an element or a part being Enlightenment. But it's as though if one speaks in terms of say, reactivity or creativity, at all, one must regard the human being, leaving aside for the moment the question of animals, one must regard the human being as consisting of both. Though to begin with, in very unequal

proportions.

Dhammadinna: Is this sort of related to the idea of in the six realms the seeds of potentiality ...?

S: Yes, one could say that. In terms of that pictorial symbolism, there are seeds in all the different forms of existence - the seeds of Enlightenment are present, but in some forms there are more seeds than in others. (Dhammadinna: The balance is different.) Meaning that, it's more easy to grow for people or for beings of that sort to make the effort towards Enlightenment, than it is for others with or represented as being with fewer seeds.

Dhammadinna: Do the animal realm have? --- It does have ...

S: The animal realm has seeds. But again, how far does one want to go? One could say that in as much as an animal can so to speak, produce a human being, that is to say, in as much as animals in the course of the lower evolution develop into human beings, well, there must be some element of humanity even in animals. Just as for human beings to develop into Enlightened beings there must be some element of Enlightenment, even in unenlightened human beings. You can go all the way back to the amoeba. Do you see what I mean?

But perhaps one is just misleading oneself with language. Perhaps you know, we need say no more than that: "well, in dependence upon the amoeba, arose the next highest form of life, whatever it was'. Right up into in dependence upon the higher apes arose human beings. In dependence upon unenlightened human beings arose Enlightened beings'."

Maybe we should use that sort of language more. Not sort of reify this sort of language of potentiality which involves us in endless metaphysical problems; which are perhaps pseudo-problems even, which are perhaps essentially linguistic.

Rosie O: There's no reassuring Bhante - now that you've got the potential - to be reassured. (Laughter)

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S: Well, it's not so much set, that you've got a thing - there's this sort of thing: "I've got potential!" (Laughter) but it's if you make the effort, then dependent upon that, that is to say, the effort, as cause or condition, the experience of Enlightenment for you can arise.

Rosie O: Otherwise it's not even Samsara, in the long term, one could say earlier on ...

S: Anyway that way a bit of a sort of excursion into philosophy, if it was philosophy. So there are various quotations then from Sutras you notice all late Mahayana works - this is affirmed in the Samadhiraja Sutra - "Tathagatagarbha embraces and permeates all beings". Doesn't even say all human beings, you know. It's all beings. Then it says: "All beings are endowed with Tathagatagarbha". That's a bit, in a way dangerous, that sort of statement, because it does suggest that they've got it already and one should be careful about thinking one has got it already. Then: "Just as butter exists permeating milk, so does Tathagatagarbha permeate all beings".

That's rather interesting because how do you know that butter permeates milk? How do you

know? You churn it, yes, you churn it. In other words, you make an effort, and then in dependence upon the milk, there arises butter. Now you can ask this question: In what sense does the butter, before the milk is churned exist in the milk? Now you see, this is the cause of the question: Is it that there is milk mixed with the butter? No, that isn't really the position.

Dhammadinna: It's the particles that re-form themselves in a different way.

S: Yes.

Marion: It's the combination of the particles being there and actually having faith that they ...

S: Well, what makes you have faith that when you churn milk you'll get butter, not jam? (Laughter) (Pause) It's been done before. Perhaps you've done it before yourself. It was there the comparison breaks down. Supposing you've seen your mother do it. Well, you know that if you want to get butter from milk, you have to churn it; you have to put that sort of energy in. It doesn't mean there is a lump of butter underneath the milk, or even distributed in the milk. So, we mustn't think of the Tathagatagarbha, or the seed of Enlightened being, in human [71] beings in that sort of way - like a lump of butter hidden in the milk, or lurking underneath it.

Dhammadinna: The first person who churned milk must have done it by accident. (Laughter)

S: This is possible.

Vajrasuri: By carrying it in a bag over a distance and it settled itself into butter. (Laughter)

S: Yes, the analogy breaks down (Laughter)

Dhammadinna: The first person that gained Enlightenment didn't do it by accident.

S: No. It follows by the nature of the thing that it is impossible. But at any rate, this comparison is a bit more helpful isn't it? Because it suggests that there are not sort of two things: butter and milk - butter as butter coexists with milk and then you somehow extract the butter from the milk. The butter is a transformation of the milk and you transform the butter by exerting energy - by subjecting the butter to a process. So in the same way, it is not that Enlightenment is somehow lurking within the Samsara, that there is a seed actually present, but you subject the Samsara to a certain process, a process of churning: in other words, spiritual life, spiritual practice. And the Samsara for you, complete - that portion of Samsara which is you is transformed into Enlightenment! Like milk becoming butter.

So milk no longer exists, only butter exists. Samsara no longer exists as far as you are concerned, only Enlightenment exists, Is that a bit more helpful?

Rosie O: Yes. I don't know whether this is why people say they feel a bit stirred up! (Laughter)

S: In a positive sort of way. Kalyanamitra is the churning stick. (Laughter) Or even if you don't succeed in becoming butter, at least you're whipped cream; something like that. (Laughter)

There is also a question of, when one speaks of, say, milk becoming butter, this suggests that milk and butter can not be two totally different things. Otherwise it would be meaningless to even think of the one becoming the other. So therefore, one might say, well, Samsara and Nirvana, they are not two totally different things. They are the two [72] different processes. If they were two totally different things, then one could not possibly, so to speak, become the other. So you must be, from one point of view, Samsara, from another point of view, Nirvana. Do you see what I mean? The Nirvana aspect of you, again in a manner of speaking, may not be very visible bit in a sense, again in a manner of speaking, it's there. But it's there as butter is present in milk but the process of churning is needed to make it visible, but not that it's actually present as butter in the milk.

Annie F: That must be what it means when it says 'All beings are endowed with Tathagatagarbha'.

S: That suggests if one takes it too literally, that all beings, that is to say, the same milk, have a sort of lump of butter stuck on to them - that is to say, they have the Tathagatagarbha. Do you see what I mean? One must avoid using language in such a way as to suggest that. I mean, Enlightenment is not something that you the unenlightened individual ever have added on to you in any way. It's more something into which you are transformed, or into which you transform yourself. So that you cease to be unenlightened and become Enlightened - cease to be reactive and become creative.

Perhaps the concept of energy here is useful. It's the same energy, one might say, but it's taken a different direction; it's functioning in another way. Instead of simply circling round and round, it's spiralling up and up. One can speak perhaps in these terms, even though one must treat the concept of energy even, with some caution. I mean, perhaps, when one says for instance, or one started off by saying, one is, as it were, Samsara rather than Nirvana - although one can see that there is a little element of Nirvana, a little seed of Nirvana in the midst of the Samsara. Well, perhaps one shouldn't even speak in either of those ways. Maybe you're really neither. At any given moment you can make a choice. Not that you are either one or the other, it's a question of the choice that you make from moment to moment. That's where the freedom comes in. But so far we've tended to make the wrong choices, apparently, but we can stop doing that gradually. (Pause)

There's another quotation: "Tathata which becomes purified, although it is in itself undifferentiated in and for all beings, is Buddhahood; because of it all sentient beings are endowed with its essence." It's a bit like the milk and the butter comparison, isn't it? We think of the milk as being impure and the butter as being pure; but this comparison of the impure gradually being purified isn't [73] really very helpful in some ways, because if you purify something and make it pure so that only the purity manifests, well, what you purify it of, or from is sort of thrown away, so there is a sort of residual dualism. Do you see what I am getting at?

Whereas if one thinks in terms of energy, well, it's the total energy, that is transformed. There is nothing that is literally thrown away. But can you really purify something, literally, without throwing away the impurities? I mean, purification means separating the impurities and presumably throwing away, but if you take that figure of speech too literally, there can be misunderstandings.

Again, you can think of yourself as something essentially pure entangled with things which are impure. The Jains think very much like this. They think of Karma as a sort of sticky substance which surrounds the unchanging, permanent pure soul and the soul has to sort of extract itself, to disentangle itself. They think of Karma as a sort of vast mass of sticky tape that is wound round and round you. Or maybe it's quite helpful to think like that provided you realize that that's poetry, that's metaphor, even myth. Provided you don't take it literally and try to work things out philosophically on that sort of basis. For instance, asking yourself what the Karma is made of, you know, because sticky tape has to be made of something. Or what the sticky stuff is? Or how many times it's wound round? (Laughter) That's sort of taking the metaphor too literally.

Vajrasuri: That's like using psychological terms and you just get more and more into means rather and you just get nowhere It just goes round and round. (Pause)

S: All right, I'd like to carry on to the next paragraph:

Vajrapushpa: "Now all beings are endowed with Tathagatagarbha, because Dharmakaya which is Sunyata, permeates them; because in the very nature of things which is Tathata, there are no differentiations, and in all sentient beings there are factors which allocate them to certain families. Thus is stated in the Uttaratantra:

Because of the permeation of Sambuddhakaya, of the undifferentiatedness of Tathata, And of the existence of families, all sentient beings are constantly endowed with Buddha-nature."

S: Well, here of course again one has to be very careful not to read metaphors too literally. "Now all beings are endowed with Tathagatagarbha, because Dharmakaya which is Sunyata, permeates them" So what does one mean by permeating? Let's go back to this comparison of the butter and the milk. One could say that butter permeates the milk. [74] So what does that really mean?

Linda: It means that there is no part of the milk that doesn't have the potential to become butter.

S: Yes, right, yes. It doesn't mean that the butter as butter is lurking so to speak, somehow, in the midst of or underneath the milk. It only means that if you say that butter permeates the milk, then every part of the milk equally is capable of being made into butter. So when one says that "all beings are endowed with Tathagatagarbha because Dharmakaya which is Sunyata permeates them", well, one should not think that there is a sort of entity called Dharmakaya or Sunyata, which is somehow lurking in the midst of sentient beings. No. The language of permeation is just a more metaphysical way of putting the fact that beings can gain Enlightenment, if they make the effort. So it isn't really an explanation though it sort of almost poses as an explanation. It's just another way, a more abstract way of putting the same thing.

Dhammadinna: It says "Dharmakaya which is Sunyata". Dharmakaya means Enlightenment, is it?

S: Yes. According to Mahayana, especially the (Dharmacara) teaching, the Buddha has 'three bodies': 'Nirmanakaya', 'Sambhogakaya', 'Dharmakaya'. The Dharmakaya means the 'body of

absolute truth' or 'Reality'. That is to say it is that aspect of the Buddha's personality which is non different from Reality itself. So to say that this which is therefore Sunyata, permeates all beings, means that all beings are capable if they make the effort of realizing that. It means no more than that. What in a way is the upshot of the whole discussion? In the most general terms, not in a sort of philosophical way.

Marion: How people can become Enlightened. (Laughter) (S: Yes.)

Rosie A: That you aren't in any way limited.

Kay: If we come to see ourselves as unfixed it's easier to go on ...

S: But how do we come to see ourselves as 'fixed'? I mean within the context of the present discussion.

[75]

Debbie: By taking, just different concepts too literally.

S: Yes, by taking different concepts too literally, understanding language too literally. As we saw, you take the fact that if you make an effort you are able to become Enlightened; you take that as meaning you are already Enlightened and then you start arguing from that. Do you see what I mean? That we are doing this sort of thing with language all the time. Supposing you forget something. Supposing you forget a friend's telephone number and then you remember it. Well, you say: "Where was the telephone number or the recollection of the telephone number in the interval, during which I forgot it? It must have been there somewhere?" So you think of it as having been in a sort of mental box, from which it was taken out, when you did recall the telephone number. But this is sort of literalistic thinking, and that can be quite dangerous when you start reasoning from these literalistic interpretations, as sort of philosophical premises.

So it's this sort of thing that we find happening here. I mean even in some Buddhist philosophy, comes perilously near that. It's as though people can't rest content with the simple statement: "Well, if you make an effort, you'll gain Enlightenment!" (Laughter) So they have to start speculating: "Well, am I Enlightened already in a sense? If so, in what sense? And what is the relation then between that Enlightened state of that Enlightenment which I already am or have and my present unenlightened state, etc., etc.?" Thus raising all sorts of really quite unreal philosophic answers. (Laughter)

So it's probably much better just to stick to ordinary language, the meaning of which is usually quite clear, for practical purposes, and not try to develop common sense statements in a metaphysical sort of way. Do you see what I'm getting at? And we certainly find that the historical Buddha himself, as far as we can see, didn't indulge in philosophical language or metaphysical speculations.

He did make it clear that if human beings made the effort, they could gain Enlightenment, but he didn't say anything about their being potentially Enlightened, or about what happened to the Enlightenment, so to speak, or where it was, or what relation it had to them as a sort of metaphysical entity before they had actually realized it. He didn't enter into those sort of speculations at all! But in the case of the Mahayana, Mahayana philosophy, even Hinayana

philosophy, they did do that, to some extent. So here we find some trace of that, but would you like to read on?

[76]

Jenny: In the first instance, it has been said 'Dharmakaya which is Sunyata, permeates all beings'. This means that since the Buddha is essentially Dharmakaya and Dharmakaya Sunyata and since this Sunyata permeates all beings, the latter are endowed with Buddha-nature."

S: Well, yes and no, because 'since this Sunyata permeates all beings' if you make the effort you can realize that Sunyata. You don't have to include 'the latter are endowed with Buddha-nature', because that really is another abstract way of putting the fact that if you make the effort, you can become Enlightened. All right, carry on then:

Kay: "It has further been stated 'There are no differentiations in the very nature of things which is Tathata'. This means that beings are endowed with Buddha-nature since in the Tathata of Buddhas and of sentient beings there is no differentiation into good or bad, great or small, high or low."

S: So what does this really mean? This idea of non-differentiation. Does it mean that there is a sort of unchanging metaphysical entity, which all things equally are? Does it really mean that? That would be a form of 'substantialism' or even 'eternalism', which is an extreme in Buddhism. What does it mean by saying that 'there are no differentiations in the very nature of things which is Tathata'. This means that beings are endowed with Buddha-nature since in the Tathata of Buddhas and of sentient beings there is no differentiation into good or bad, great or small, high or low"?

Marion: Could it mean that the undeveloped state is potential for the developed state?

S: Mmm. It really means no more than that: that an unenlightened human being can become an Enlightened human being. This means that there cannot be any essential, irreducible difference between the two. But perhaps you shouldn't even use that sort of language. You shouldn't even say that there is no difference between the two. Because no one has said that there is a difference between the two, presumably. So is it not sufficient to say that, "well, an unenlightened human being can become an Enlightened human being"? Does one really have to go into all this business of differentiated and not differentiated and so on. This is metaphysical language. Is it really necessary? Does it really help? Well, one could ask that.

Debbie: Do you feel that this has gone astray from the Buddha's teaching?

[77]

S: I think that there is a danger of that. I think in some ways, the Buddha's actual teaching was more sophisticated. I think that's not the general view. It's as though the Buddha was much more aware of the limitations of language than people were subsequently. It's as though some even of the great philosophers got a bit led astray by language itself.

Rosie O: Wasn't it a jumping off point, where the Buddha said somewhere in the scriptures that "this Citta is meaningless, it has been defiled"?

S: Well, there is a passage to that effect, in the Pali Canon, but there's only one such passage. You might say that was the jumping off point. You might say that some Buddhist philosophers seized hold of it. But that is a quite exceptional passage. It does occur in what seems to be quite an old ... of the teaching - the (Canon Rudatha?) (in the Nirmanakaya?). So perhaps the Buddha did actually say that, but if he did ...

(End of Tape 3)

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S: Let me just finish my sentence - but if he said it, well, he said it only once, and that is perhaps significant. Perhaps this is speculative, he didn't want to permanently exclude a principle, any particular way of expressing things but certainly his habitual speech was not what I thought ...

: In this citta there's something about it being defiled.

S: The Buddha is supposed to have said this citta is luminous by nature, the defilements come from outside, but he used this sort of language only once.

: Could you go into it a bit where he said the Buddha was considerably more sophisticated, his language was certainly more sophisticated.

S: That he was more sophisticated say in his attitude towards language, because he wouldn't engage in metaphysical speculations. He realized, in other words, the limitations of language. Most people don't realize the limitations of language, they think it's obvious what language means. But the Buddha as far as we can judge from the Pali canon, was very aware of the limitations of language, but it is in that, that his sophistication exists. Perhaps I shouldn't say so much that he was aware of the limitations of language, he knew, he understood what language could do, and he also understood what language couldn't do. He didn't try to make language do what language was inherently incapable of doing and he didn't mistake a metaphorical expression for a literal one.

One could say that language is inherently metaphorical, but that we don't usually realize the fact, as though the Buddha realized that language was metaphorical by its nature. Take this expression which has been used during the tea-break - the 'subconscious'. All right, there's the conscious mind, that's clear enough, isn't it? But then you've got a subconscious mind or at least a subconscious mind is posited nowadays, by say, psychoanalysis. But what does subconscious mean? Subconscious means under or below, but can you literally have one mind below another mind? Do you see what I mean? Is what we call the 'subconscious', in any literal sense below what we call the conscious? But it can't be, because consciousness itself is not a spatial phenomenon, so what do we mean by that? Well, we can't take it literally. We think we know what it mean, of course, - the subconscious is below the conscious, but it can't mean that literally. [79] So what does it mean? If isn't to be taken literally which it can't be taken. We think we know what it means; we think we understand what it means; we think, yes, there is a level of mind say, which is subconscious, below the conscious. But what do we really mean by that? Perhaps we really don't know what we're talking about.

: Well you can experience it, but I don't know how you find the words to describe it. You

experience it through poetry, or art or music or dreams or whatever.

S: But how does one come to speak of it as a subconscious? Well, one might just as well speak of it as a super-conscious - it doesn't really make any difference in principle. But why sub or super at all? Can one put it into non-spatial language, because it isn't a spatial thing you're talking about at all.

: It's symbolic isn't [it], not subconscious because it's under.

S: But cannot one put it in literal terms, state what it actually is, or what is actually going on?

: What's going on is that you're conscious of certain things at any one time, then something else pops into your mind, you then ...

S: Of course, when you say into your mind, that's a metaphorical expression (Laughter)

: ... become aware of something else, you weren't previously aware of in the past moment (S: Right, that's all that really happens.) and you say that's coming from below, or above or outside or coexistent.

S: But do you really need to say that it's coming from below, or it's coming from above, or if you do then what does that really signify?

: Well you've put a value judgement on it.

S: Ah, you've put a value judgement on it. So you shouldn't, if you pursue the matter further. Any question you ask should be based on a literal reading so to speak, of the metaphorical expression which would catch instead what it's really communicating - that is to say [80] the value judgement.

: Could you say that again?

S: All right, let's go back a bit. For some reason or other in human language, what is low is literally, that is to say, in space, has come to be associated with what is "low" in value. You see? And what is high or elevated in space, has come to be associated with what is of greater worth, greater spatial expression in value. Do you see what I mean? Why that was so, perhaps we can't go into that now, we'll never find out. But what is sort of spatially low has come to be associated with what is of inferior value. So when we speak of a subconscious that is a consciousness which is below the unconscious, we are really giving expression to a value judgement. Do you see what I mean? Supposing you're conscious of a particular object and then you as you said your consciousness changes, you become conscious of some other object, of which you had not been thinking and if that other object is say, of inferior value, then we may say that it comes from the subconscious. Do you see what I mean?

Let's give a concrete example: suppose for instance, you think that you entertain certain ideas or a certain philosophy as a result of quite 'high' spiritual motives, but then you suddenly become aware that that is not so. That subconsciously you were in search of security. So what does that mean? That means that you have not correctly valued or evaluated your motivation. You could say that your motivation is not from the super-conscious, it is from the

subconscious. But you're not really making a statement, a pseudo-spatial statement as to where motivation has come from, you are only really using spatial language indicating evaluation. So therefore, no one should proceed to ask you, say, a question based upon a literal understanding of the spatial framework that you've given to your evaluation. Do you see what I mean?

But this is sometimes what happens ... in that way pseudo-philosophical questions arise. Say for instance in this case, well, one might ask ... say of the subconscious, well is it bigger than the unconscious? Do you see what it is? Supposing you are then so unaware - "Well, yes, I think the subconscious is bigger than the conscious mind". Well, how much bigger? Is it twice as big, or three times as big? One can pursue the question in this way which is based upon a sort of literal reading of your essentially metaphorical language. In this way quite artificial problems arise.

So, sometimes I think, well, awareness of this sort of thing, [81] awareness of this possibility, awareness that language can be used or misused. Metaphorical language can be used or misused in this way. This constitutes a sort of sophistication, a linguistic sophistication and I think the Buddha had that to go back to your question.

I think that is why he refrained from metaphysical speculations and why he specifically stated that certain questions can not be determined. These are the 14 so called (ajakatas) or undeclared, or unexamined questions. It says it cannot be stated, for instance, whether space is finite, or infinite or both or neither. Or that the Tathagata, the Buddha, exists after death or does not exist, or both or neither. He was aware of the limitations of language, but where he trod very cautiously sometimes, it follows a very rough ... all sorts of philosophical statements and speculations got themselves into sometimes serious trouble. Among themselves, with followers of other philosophies, other religions, and so on.

: It's very difficult to, while reading things, to know whether it's the person who's written it has gone a bit off, or whether it's you just misunderstanding it all.

S: Well, one must just be very aware and ask oneself well, what does this mean? What does it mean?

: It's confusing, difficult, there's something not quite right there, it's ...

: My understanding of the subconscious was aligned to depth, then it gets into space again.

S: But then depth is also a metaphorical expression. Again for instance, if we evaluate metaphorically in terms of light and darkness, we talk of bright deeds and dark deeds in the Pali canon. So bright and light, high and low, big and small - or he's very big-hearted or he's very small-hearted.

: It almost seems impossible to talk (Laughter), to find the words to describe the experience.

S: Well, then one might say, what is the purpose of speech? One might say, anyway we're coming on to rather different ground, the purpose of speech is not to describe reality. The purpose of speech is to conduce to a certain action.

[82]

: The purpose of speech is to conduce to a certain action?

S: To get somebody to do something (Laughter). So when the Buddha is saying "Nirvana is this and Nirvana is that", assuming that he doesn't very often, he's not concerned with communicating what Nirvana is like, but to get you to follow a certain path, to do something. Do you see what I mean? So in the teaching of the Buddha, as contained in the Pali canon, this is very much the emphasis. This is what we mean by saying it's practical. The Buddha's not concerned with a philosophical exposition of abstract reality, if such a thing were possible. When he seems to be, he is in fact urging you to take a certain line of action.

: Would you say that if you read those things, if you could interpret them in those ways, you should be quite suspicious?

S: Yes! For instance, all right, take the teaching of sunyata. All right what difference does it make, in action, one could ask oneself that. What was the Buddha wanting you to do, or how was the Buddha wanting you to behave, when he taught the teaching of Sunyata? What did it really mean in practical terms?

: Unattachment.

S: Yes, because attachment suggests that there can be something fixed for you to be attached to, and sunyata makes it clear that there isn't anything fixed of that nature. So the Buddha is much more concerned with what one does and apparently abstract statements of a sort of philosophical nature, are really intended to sort of nudge you in a particular direction. They're all incitements to action, or non-action, you could say, in the case of getting you to abstain from unskillful activities.

: Sometimes it sets up a reaction of irritation because you feel you can't understand what the words mean, and you don't know where they were pointing, and you're left out on a limb somewhere, not knowing whether you're up or down or sideways.

S: Well, the fact is you're not anywhere like that (Laughter) because you are not essentially a spatial phenomenon, so therefore, there's no question of you being either up or down or sideways or any [83] other such position however dignified or undignified. Do you see what I mean? What you really are getting at, or you should be getting at, is that confused as to values. (Laughter) Well, this is what it means, doesn't it? This is what you do mean surely?

: Yes, you've got nothing to hang things on.

S: But I think really, we must be much more alert to the meaning of words, the nuances of words, and what [a] statement really mean. Sometimes we're incredibly naive or ignorant in this sort of way, aren't we? We don't really stop and ask ourselves what we really mean by the things that we ourselves are saying. For instance, we say "people should be more open". We use this very sort of metaphorically. The question is, do we know exactly what we mean by this? What do you mean when you say to some one - "Oh you should be more open". Well you're clearly trying to get them to do something, to take a certain line of action; well, what do you mean by that, "you should be more open"? Please translate that into non-metaphorical language. What do you mean by saying that someone should be more open?

: More honest maybe. It depends on the person doesn't it, and the interaction?

S: Yes. I don't think it quite corresponds to honest.

: Forthcoming, expressive.

S: Forthcoming is a bit metaphorical.

: Receptual, receptive or reciprocal.

S: (Receptual) that is metaphorical too, but open, well, unrestricted, undetermined, not sort of fixed or conditioned in advance. Not taking up any particular attitude with regards to what you have to say. Well, attitude again is a metaphorical expression of course. (Laughter) Not adopting any particular stance, another metaphorical position in relation to what you were - not evaluating prematurely.

: Not having any preconceived ideas.

S: Not having a preconceived idea, yes. But I mean there are lots of these sorts of expressions that we use quite literally and which are [84] sort of current but we don't ask ourselves what we really mean when we use them ... or slogans. If it's a negative sort of a Connotation, well, you just throw it at people you don't like, or disagree with, and if it's a positive one, you just sort of decorate your friends or yourselves with it. For instance, sometime ago there was the Bishop of Woolwich having difficulties with God, or the concept of God, so he started speaking of God as the 'Ground of Being,' (Capital G, capital B) but did that really solve anything? (Laughter) This highly metaphorical expression 'the Ground of Being', it sounds sort of profound or very profound, but it's a sort of very pseudo-profundity. Well, this 'Ground of Being', it's that which supports everything, do you know what I mean? But is there any great novelty in saying that God is that which supports everything? And in what sense does God support everything? It's as though God is a sort of foundation in a quite literal sense. Well, again, how does one translate that into non-metaphorical language, non-figurative language?

Someone commenting upon it said "well there's nothing new, instead of thinking of God as 'Sky Father' you were beginning to think of him as 'Earth Mother'." (Laughter) The earth underneath supported everything. It's like the old Indian cosmology: the earth floats in a great ocean and that ocean is contained in a bowl, but what supports the bowl? Well, the bowl is supported on the back of four great elephants ... but what do they stand on? (Laughter) Well, they stand on the back of a gigantic tortoise. Well, what supports the tortoise? Well, he's swimming in a vast ocean.

But are these really explanations, but a lot of our philosophical explanations are of this nature really. But instead of speaking of elephants and tortoises and things, we use highly abstract expressions which are so abstract that you don't notice that they are no less metaphorical than the elephants and the tortoises. Well, what supports existence when God is the Ground of Being? Well, that's no better than the elephant or the tortoise really. And what supports that Ground of Being, is the Ground, not her Ground, Ground. (Laughter) Which is the sort of basic Ground, the original Ground. That is not an explanation at all. So we're happy, just like the child, the Indian, the ancient Indian when told the elephant stands on the back of a

tortoise. So we're told what's the ground. What is the ground? Why it's a purely verbal trick; it's a verbal con-trick, one could say. But a lot of philosophy both in the East and the West, is like this. It seems very profound, its language is very portentous but it doesn't really convey anything; it isn't an expression of real Insight. I mean the Buddha had Insight, the [85] Buddha was after all the definition of Enlightenment. You know, the Buddha didn't go in for that sort of thing; the Buddha pointed out a path.

: There seems to be a need for security, rationalization, you sort of question things, but you provide yourself with a solid answer.

S: This is why - we're going a bit off the track - but perhaps this is quite useful - the Buddha was so hard on what he called 'ditthis' views which meant sort of philosophical views and he said quite clearly that they are what we would call rationalizations or unskilful mental states. Rationalizations of attachments, rationalizations of insecurity, dependence and so on. Or there again, the Buddha was, so to speak, intellectually or even spiritually, very sophisticated.

So this is why the greater part of what appears to have been the Buddha's spiritual teaching, is concerned just with the path - what you must do, what you must practice. This is mainly concerned with sila and samadhi, and to some extent with prajna, but the Buddha says very little about reality or ultimate reality or anything like that. He gives very few hints. He doesn't encourage people to lose themselves in speculations about ultimate reality. He concentrates on experience. And with a gradual, what shall I say, purification of one's own experience, from something reactive into something creative unenlightened into something Enlightened and so on. So in the Buddha's own teaching, you get much more about the path than about the goal much less still, certainly much less about, so to speak, the underlying reality which supports, supposedly the path and the goal, there's almost nothing about that at all. The Buddha doesn't even think in that sort of way.

: Would you say that is just you trying to put off doing something, actually doing something?

S: Or, an attempt to provide yourself with an excuse for doing something.

: Perhaps it wasn't necessary for the Buddha to go into what Enlightenment was, because he was there, he was around and everybody could see it, but now it's a bit remote.

S: But the same thing can apply even on a so to speak, much reduced [86] scale because we find even people say, who come along to our centres, if they see that the Order Members and Mitras are bright and happy, positive and they don't usually encounter so many bright, happy, positive people in one place altogether, they cannot but wonder how do they do it? What's the reason for this " And they can be drawn, they can start feeling - well, perhaps if I started coming along maybe I'd become like that. It does happen in that sort of way, I know. It's not very difficult perhaps to be more positive than the majority of people and sometimes it is noticeable.

: Lokamitra talked about fishes and said that we were really small fish but you were a really big fish. (Laughter)

S: I'm not quite sure what a question such as that really resembles.

: He was talking about an ocean or something and making a splash. I can't remember - maybe somebody does? (Laughter)

: Speaking metaphorically of course!

S: So I think, to come back to the text, one can be misled into thinking that, say, a statement is profound, philosophical, when actually it's sort of pseudo-metaphorical and you're taking the metaphor too literally. In that way you're just getting confused. Anyway, this is all a result of ...

"It has further been stated "There are no differentiations in the very nature of things which is Tathata! This means that beings are endowed with Buddha-nature since in the Tathata of Buddhas and of sentient beings there is no differentiation into good or bad, great or small, high or low." Which means no more than that an unenlightened human being can become an Enlightened human being, that any unenlightened human being can become an Enlightened human being. But the practical ... and that is really what is meant and one might even say all that is meant, all that needs to be meant.

: Could you say again what is meant by Tathata?

S: 'Tathata' is a quite abstract word in Mahayana Buddhism, similar to Sunyata. Tathata is 'thus' or 'such', as when you say it's thus or it's such, or it's such as it is, whatever that may be. I mean 'tathata' is the abstract noun formed from that, so it is that-ness or such-ness, so it's [a] very very abstract word for what I was going to say, 'existence'. [87] But it's even more subtle, more rarefied than that. It doesn't even say something exists or doesn't but such as it is, it's suchness as it is, this is identical in Buddhas and non-Buddhas.

: That is suchness at the present or just as it is or ...?

S: No. Perhaps one has to go back a step further. In philosophy, in metaphysics, one tries to qualify the nature of existence in general, or if you like Reality, what it is. Well, usually that amounts to defining in terms of abstract being, but in the Mahayana they go even further than that. They don't think in terms of abstract being of which all specific things are different individual transformations. This is more the Hindu and the ... view. The Mahayana to begin with, speaks of all things being Sunyata or empty or void. But it does go even further than that and it speaks of them all being, sharing in, so to speak, one Tathata, one suchness. It doesn't even say that all things are existent, all things are empty. But whatever they have in common, so to speak, it reifies that and speaks of it as Tathata, 'suchness', such as it is - ness. That is what they have in common. It doesn't say whether it is mind or matter or being or non-being or sunyata or whatever, but whatever it is, it reifies it as a concept. They have it in common (Laughter) . And so an even more rarefied concept than that of abstract being or ...

: They don't even fix it either.

S: They're trying not to fix anything because even Sunyata if you take it literally, seems to fix something. You know the things are empty as distinct from full, but Tathata doesn't fall into that sort of trap so to speak, things are as they are. The 'such as they are-ness' of those things which are. So it sometimes said that you must try to realize that the suchness of things, or in Mahayana and Zen, they think of true suchness or real suchness, you know, as being the

object of your quest. There's a suggestion that words don't express that 'suchness'. You have to go beyond words, experience things themselves, Reality itself. You don't have any concept that it is this or it is that, it is what it is. Try to realize 'that as it is-ness' or 'such as it is-ness', the Tathata. Don't have any preconceived idea about what is that you're trying to realize, not even that it is existent, not even that is non-existent, not even that it is void because all these are concepts. In other words, by means of words, the terms, the concept, is trying to do away with words and [88] to make you realize the limitations of words and ideally to get you back to concrete experience but it's doing it in a roundabout way.

When Ashvagoshana himself beginning the awakening of faith, uses this sort of language, says we use words to get free from words, until we reach the pure word-ness [less?] essence. So this indicates something of the function, the Tathata. Of course, also the title of the Buddha, the Tathagata, the Buddha always is one who is thus gone, or thus come. It depends on how you define the word grammatically. It doesn't mean that he's gone to Nirvana, or come from Nirvana. He is thus gone, thus come. There are different interpretations of that

It's the same word basically as such.

Well go through the next paragraph in the verse about the families:

"Finally, 'In all sentient beings there are factors which allocate them to certain families'. This means that they live in the five types of Buddha-families given below: The Cut-off family, the Dubious-family, the Sravaka-family, the Pratyekabuddha family, and the family of followers of the Mahayana way of life. Under these five families beings are subsumed as belonging to Buddha-families."

S: What is this business of families, what are these families, the Cut-off family, the Dubious-family etc., etc. Well, put it this way, let's say, using the language .. to use.

You have a potentiality for Enlightenment, being that you have a tendency towards Enlightenment, but Enlightenment is of different kinds, let us say. According to the Hinayana/Kalyana tradition, there's the Enlightenment of a Buddha that is Samyak-Sambodhi, and there's also what came to be regarded as the inferior Enlightenment of the Arhant, or of the Pratyekabuddha. So the suggestion is here that you have a natural tendency towards one or another kind of Enlightenment. So that all the different people with the same tendency towards this or that form of Enlightenment fall naturally into sort of different spiritual families. Do you see what I mean? This is all that this is saying. This is quite a prominent idea in Mahayana Buddhism. So you've got in the first one - I'm going to go through them in a slightly different order - you've got the Sravaka family that is to say, the family of those, the spiritual family of those, whose natural tendency so to speak, is towards Enlightenment for themselves alone. Let's just discuss the matter in traditional terms without evaluating those terms critically.

There are all those who've got a natural tendency towards Enlightenment just for themselves alone. They are said to belong to the Sravaka family, or [are] disciples of the Buddha, especially an Arhant disciple of the Buddha. [89] So there's a family of all those with a natural tendency so to speak, towards individual Enlightenment. Is that clear?

Then there's the spiritual family of all those with a natural tendency towards the

Enlightenment of a Pratyekabuddha. Now Pratyekabuddha, according to tradition, is one who gains Enlightenment without having an Enlightened Buddha as his teacher, and who has no disciples. So he differs from the Arhant, the Sravaka. The Arhant gains Enlightenment for himself alone with the help of a teacher, but he himself has no disciples. So the Pratyekabuddha gains Enlightenment for himself alone according to tradition, but without the help of a teacher, an Enlightened teacher, and he also, like the Arhant has no disciples. Do you see the distinction? So there's the family of the Pratyekabuddhas, those who have a natural tendency towards this kind of Enlightenment, who want to gain Enlightenment without having any Enlightened teacher, and without having any disciples.

And then there's the spiritual family of those who follow the Mahayana way of life. That is to say, the Bodhisattvas, that is to say the spiritual family of those who aim at, or have a natural tendency towards supreme Enlightenment, that is to say Enlightenment gained with the help of a teacher at least in one's previous life and not for one's own sake alone, but for the benefit of all living beings. The people who have that sort of tendency towards that sort of Enlightenment, are said to belong to the family of the Mahayana, the family of the Bodhisattvas. Is that clear? So this is the principle sub-division; these are the three main groups, the three main spiritual families.

Are there any historical examples of these first two in particular?

S: Certainly, according to the Pali Canon, plenty of examples of Arhants, but it seems there aren't any, or very few historical examples of the Pratyekabuddha. In fact, the whole concept of Pratyekabuddha is a bit mysterious. But anyway, sort of taking the tradition as it exists, or as it has come down, there are these three kinds of Enlightenment. In a way, these three ideals of Enlightenment, and these three kinds of people making up these three families of people who have a natural tendency towards this or that or the other kind of Enlightenment, or from the ideal of Enlightenment.

: Do these first two actually gain Enlightenment?

S: Well, yes. (Laughter)

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: It seems like a contradiction in terms.

S: Well this is why I said that according to the tradition as it exists or as it has come down. What it represents, how it has come about, that is another question. But taking it all at its face value, yes it is said that these are these three kinds of Enlightenment: that of the Arhant, that of the Pratyekabuddha, that of the Bodhisattva or that of the Supreme Buddha, the Samyak Sambuddha. So yes, they are all equally Enlightened in the sense that there is something which they all three have in common, but clearly also there is some difference, what that difference consists in, that is another matter.

Whether one can really speak in terms of different kinds of Enlightenment that is another matter. But this is what tradition says; both Hinayana and Mahayana traditions. There are these three different kinds of Enlightenment which overlap to some extent, but not completely. Otherwise there wouldn't be three kinds of Enlightenment. It wouldn't be possible to speak in that sort of way. Well, anyway this is the tradition that has down to Gampopa and

he's dealing with it in this particular way. Anyway that still leaves two other families. First of all the Dubious family, well literally, the undetermined family.

The Dubious family consists of all those who have a tendency, a natural tendency, as it were, towards Enlightenment but without having a natural tendency towards any of the other previous three families. They could go any way, maybe according to circumstances. They don't have a definite tendency either towards Enlightenment for themselves alone or towards Enlightenment for themselves alone without an Enlightened teacher, or towards even supreme Enlightenment of a Buddha. They are undetermined. They don't have a definite tendency in this or that or the other direction. (End of side One)

And then sixth and lastly there's the Cut-off, sorry fifth and lastly, the Cut-off family. Now what are the Cut-off family? What are they cut-off from?

: Cut off from the Dharma.

S: No, They're cut off from Enlightenment. That is to say, those who don't have any tendency towards Enlightenment at all. Now here we're on rather controversial ground. (Laughter) And according to the Yogacara there are some people who have no Buddha seeds so to speak, and who will never gain Enlightenment and they're called (?), technically. The Yogacarins are the only school in Buddhism that has this belief that there are some people who will never gain [91] Enlightenment. So if you have no tendency towards Enlightenment, then you belong to the Cut-off family.

: Did you say (anchantiga?)

S: (Ichantiga??) is the technical term. You can look at this in several ways. The general Mahayana teaching is of course that everybody will one day gain Enlightenment. No that they're compelled to, but well, at least they all have the same potentiality. So what is the Yogacara really saying? Some Yogacara teachers seem to have taken this quite literally that there was in fact a class of beings who never would ever gain Enlightenment. Gampopa goes on to say, I think, or to suggest that those who belong to the Cut-off family are not those who will never, who have no tendency towards Enlightenment and who never will have. Gampopa seems to take the view that they are those who as yet have no tendency towards Enlightenment, and he says later on as we shall see, that even those who are thus characterized and said to from the Cut-off family, because their minds have been intent on wandering in samsara for a long time are not people who will never be able to obtain Enlightenment. They would do so if they would only let themselves. So he seems to take a softer line as it were. But there was another interpretation which says that yes, there are people who will never gain Enlightenment. Who are they?

: Bodhisattvas.

S: Bodhisattvas. Yes. (Laughter) Because the Bodhisattvas have taken a vow that they will - here we come on to slightly, as it were, mythological ground, but there is meaning here - Bodhisattvas are those who have taken a vow not to gain Enlightenment until all living beings have gained Enlightenment, but samsara is beginningless living beings are endless, so Bodhisattvas will go on infinitely, endlessly helping other people gain Enlightenment. Other beings gain Enlightenment, but beings will never be exhausted, so Bodhisattvas will never

gain Enlightenment. Some explain it in this way, which is perhaps rather interesting.

Greta: It's rather heartening.

S: Rather heartening! Well, to whom? (Laughter)

Greta: Sentient beings.

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: Is that expression of the Bodhisattvas - they're not the Cut-off family are they?

S: Well, yes in that case it is the Bodhisattvas who belong to the Cut-off family in a sense, though again of course, that would overlap with the family of the followers of the Mahayana way of life. But certainly it is said that the (Ichandikas?), those who will never gain Enlightenment, are the Bodhisattvas. So if one accepted that interpretation you would be left with really only four families rather than five. But now there is this question, why do you have these families at all? Why this teaching about these families and why these different kinds of Enlightenment? Are there really different kinds of Enlightenment or not?

: Is it to do with different kinds of starting points or psychological tendencies?

S: It is more like that I think. In the Pali texts, there are different passages, all those different teachings. In one place for instance, it is quite clearly suggested that there is no difference between the Enlightenment of a Buddha. There is no difference in the Enlightenment of Gotama the Buddha, and his Arhant disciples like Sariputta, Moggallana and so on. The only difference was that he gained Enlightenment first and they, Enlightenment after him, but it was the same Enlightenment, so to speak. But nonetheless, some people did see a difference between the Buddha and his Arhant disciples, even after the latter had gained Enlightenment. It was as though the Buddha had something more. So I tend personally to think that one mustn't think so much in terms of a static goal, one can even, though it seems to be a contradiction in terms, one can even think in terms of sort of degrees of Enlightenment because - think about the transcendental path which I think we were talking about yesterday - there's no reason to conceive of it as literally having an end. It could therefore be that the Buddha after gaining what seems to be Enlightenment, from the Arhant point of view, just went on to become, as it were, more Enlightened. And they, though in a sense Enlightened, were not as Enlightened as he was. They were both on the transcendental path, on very advanced stages of it, but they were still lagging a little way behind him. They were all Enlightened in the sense that they had all passed the point of no return.

: Really! That's interesting.

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S: Well, they had all passed the point of no return.

: But with the idea that Enlightenment can start from that point on.

S: Well, Enlightenment can start from that point on, in as much that Insight begins from that point on, transcendental wisdom starts from that point on.

: So there's an actual point at which say, somebody begins to be Enlightened?

S: Yes. Using this terminology, yes. In other words, the point at which your creativity becomes irreversible - you can't fall back into reactivity. So one could, as it were, imagine the Buddha and his disciples strung out along this higher transcendental path, this spiral at different points - they're all Enlightened in the sense that they're all on that irreversibly creative path, that transcendental path in the highest sense, but that doesn't mean that they're all exactly [at] the same points on it. But later on this whole more dynamic concept seems to have been lost sight of amongst sort of static goals.

Well, the Buddha has got up to that higher goal and as it were, stayed there, and the Arhant or Pratyekabuddha will have got up to slightly lower goals and stayed there, not that they were all on same path, though that concept does come into it in later. Mahayana scriptures like Saddharma Pundarika Sutra where the Arhants are told there is a higher goal. "You can become Buddhas", that's why the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra teaches Ekayana, not that there are really different Yanas. You may remember, not really different families even, but they're all on the same higher path. But they're on different points along it. The Arhant is the only, you know, - adopts an even wider perspective, can go on to become a supreme Buddha, according to the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra. According to the Hinayana teaching, once you become an Arhant, well, that's that. An Arhant is a quite different kind of being than a Samyaksambuddha. That is not the view of the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra. Up to that point, it's as though, leaving aside the Buddha's original teaching, Buddhists had believed the world has different Yanas and you really have to choose between them and you ended up with different goals, all very lofty goals, but different. Whereas the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra says "No. All these different Yanas merge into one. They're not really three different goals". But there are different stages or almost resting points on the higher transcendental path and you can move even further on, [94] after a while.

If a Bodhisattva never attains Enlightenment, presumably he's past that point of no return, - in what way is he not Enlightened?

S: Well, one could go even further than I've gone already, and say that no one ever gains Enlightenment. (Laughter) In the sense that for no one is there a fixed and final point where you finally come to rest and say "well, now this is it, now I've got there". This is again spatial thinking, but you are involved in a creative process.

: Somehow that seems really ...

S: Well, more inspiring.

: Much more inspiring!

S: Well, take for instance the case of the artist. Well, we've got one or two artists present, haven't we? All right, well, you go on producing picture after picture, painting after painting, but assuming that you go on living indefinitely and your health and strength are still there, do you ever come to a point where, this is your last picture? "Now I'm there as an artist! I've attained the goal as an artist!" No. If you're really creative, as soon as you've finished one you go on and do another one. You see what I mean? You don't see yourself as an artist reaching up to a definite point and just staying there. The nature of the creative process is such, it just

never stops. You might stop due to age or weakness or exhaustion, but that's a different matter. The creative process can go on and on indefinitely, so it is in the spiritual life.

: So the more you go on, the more there is.

S: Right. The more you want to go on. The higher up the mountainside you get, the more you can see, and the higher up you want to go. So this whole idea of a fixed final goal is really perhaps a misreading of the situation.

: Traditionally, these ten fetters which seem like the ten fetters traditionally you've got these ten fetters and then you become an Arhant. There doesn't seem to be anything more to do or perhaps you don't really ...

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S: Well not according to the Theravada view but according to the Mahayana you can go on then further to become a fully Enlightened Buddha.

: It's a bit like looking at negative and positive ways of looking at it. If you're just talking about breaking through things, well, maybe there is a point where there's no more restrictions to break through. But in terms of deepening your creative experience that presumably would continue. I don't know, but presumably, the Buddha's teaching over his life time changed, the basic principles were the same. Perhaps the way in which he could express that deepened and perhaps that wasn't so true to maybe some of the other Arhants. Is the creativity not just kind of looking at things in spatial terms again, not just the deepening of a process, but maybe to do with what original faculties you had as a human being. I mean, perhaps the Buddha's faculties were more complete in that he could, was able to communicate to more people in a deeper sense - reach more people than perhaps some of the other Enlightened disciples could although they teach, maybe there was ... You see what I'm getting at?

S: Well, it is even said in tradition that the Buddha had what we would call a greater capacity for communication, not just in the sort of human one to one, person to person sense, but that if you want to communicate sort of spiritual truths, or if you want really to help people along a spiritual path, so to speak, you have to create the right sort of intellectual framework with which the concept of a path, and following a path, makes sense and it seems a Buddha is able to do that. I mean this is according to the early tradition, an Arhant is not able to do that. It's not that. He can, as it were, express his own spiritual sense, but he doesn't have that capacity to throw a sort of conceptual bridge between himself and other people. He isn't able to formulate a sort of - well I was going to say doctrinal system, but maybe spiritual scheme is better - which can provide a theoretical basis for the leading of the spiritual life. You know the Buddha was able to speak in terms of conditionality - of there being two kinds of conditionality, etc., etc. He had that sort of vision, that sort of ability, whereas an Arhant seems, again according to early tradition, not to have had that sort of ability, not that he was less Enlightened, again according to that same early tradition.

: Is that just an ability or is it just something to do with absorbing the experience to a certain level as well, or is it both?

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S: It seems like that because, as I've said, it does seem that in the case of the Buddha, he

wasn't just Enlightened at one particular instant. But the reason why, again according to the tradition, he spent so many weeks under different trees in the neighbourhood of the Bodhi tree, was that he was absorbing the experience - it seems, exploring different aspects of it. It wasn't just an idea that came to him instantly, just grasped and that was that. No. It was something very much more than that.

So maybe you could say the Arhant is someone who hasn't really explored all the possibilities of the Enlightenment experience, and again that ties up with what I said earlier about the Arhant, Pratyekabuddha, Buddha all being on, as it were, a higher transcendental path. Not say, having come to rest at particular specific different goals. So if there is any differentiation into families, certainly in the light of the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, it comes at the beginning of the spiritual life rather than at the end. It depends on your point of departure. Do you see what I mean? You may be a person with many problems, so your point of departure is, well, getting rid of your problems. You're concerned about yourself, your own particular suffering, or you may be all right yourself, and you may be worried about the sufferings of other people. You may want to help other people your point of departure is more altruistic . Or you may be wanting to find out the meaning of existence - your point of departure, so to speak, [is] more philosophical.

Whatever your point of departure, you ought even though you may be, so to speak, initially separated into different spiritual families, these families tend to converge as the people belonging to them become more and more spiritually advanced. But all that this teaching is really saying, I think, is that from the beginning you have a certain spiritual tendency. You don't just have a general tendency towards Enlightenment, but that tendency takes a certain specific form, perhaps according to your circumstances, your experience of life, your particular point of departure.

: What about those who are the Dubious ones? Where do these Dubious people ...?

S: Well, according to tradition, they are those who don't have a particular direction, you could say. Well, they are just heading in the direction of Enlightenment without it taking any particular form or without it having any specific characteristics of its own, but just heading in the direction of Enlightenment. [97] Not Enlightenment of this kind or Enlightenment of that kind so to speak. That's the people without any pronounced experience, not pronounced in any sort of one-sided sense. They've neither particularly got problems to solve nor are they particularly concerned with helping other people, nor with philosophical problems. Maybe just out of their genuine human maturity, start heading in the direction of something finer. One could look at it that way.

But this does raise the more general question of people's more individual approach at the beginning of the spiritual life - the need that perhaps has to be met for their more specific requirements. This question arose in the case of one or two of our friends, recently, who were very much involved with the Arts. One or two of them certainly did want to commit themselves. They did want to go for refuge. They did want to be ordained. But they wondered whether by going on courses and retreats that was the best sort of preparation for them as artists . You see what I mean? They wondered if there were not some other sort of preparation, though equally valid, for people of that particular type, so to speak, or with those particular interests.

: What conclusion did they come to?

S: They haven't yet come to a conclusion. (Laughter) The matter is still under discussion. I think, in fact, that they are a little confused about it all.

: They shouldn't worry.

S: That's what I said. (Laughter) Even cited a few examples, but I think the discussion is still going on.

: These particular classifications seem a bit artificial ...

S: Well, the last three of course [are] identical with the three Yanas of the White Lotus Sutra, Saddharmapundarika Sutra, and how the three Yanas came about, well, that's quite a story in itself. Once you've got the three Yanas, well, it isn't too difficult to devise the other two categories. There are some people who don't have any specific tendency towards any particular Yana, well all right, they are the Dubious category; there are others who don't have any tendency towards Enlightenment itself, well, they are the Cut-off category, the Cut-off family. You can see how the set of five spiritual families arose at the same time.

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No doubt there is the fact that people do seem to have different approaches to the spiritual life ... goal. At the beginning of their career they seem to conceive of the goal in different ways. That is no doubt a fact that needs psychologically to be taken into consideration. But whether it's really quite as hard and fast as this teaching seems to suggest, that's another matter.

Maybe in your own spiritual life there is [a] more self-oriented approach, but that hardly is sufficient to divide you into hard and fast spiritual families. Perhaps your approach can change also as time goes on. I think, personally, it's much simpler to have very clearly in view this picture of this vision of the transcendental path, and the real point of transition being that of stream entry, beyond which there is the path of what I call 'irreversible creativity' with Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arhants, Pratyekabuddhas, all occupying different points on that path. They're on different steps as it were, of a vast sort of transcendental moving staircase, that it's not as if any of them have attained to fixed goals of one kind or another. They're all still moving, though some of them have gone so far ahead that to us they seem to be standing still. You can't actually see the movement. It's just like (when) you look up in the sky at night it is said some of the stars you see are supposedly receding from the earth at a rate of millions of miles a second, or something like that, but you can't really see the difference. It just seems to be a fixed star just standing still. (Laughter)

: Rather like the sun, because that's flaming gases in perpetual motion, and explosion (unclear)

S: Just static like a golden guinea.

: The point ... stream entrant is that things are seen as they really are ... I'm trying to understand it on a mundane level. Does that mean like just seeing a tree is a tree? Not like thinking, "Ah, well, it's a beech tree, it's spring, and it's in its new leaf ". Just experiencing the tree.

S: Well, you're seeing the tree as a tree, but isn't the fact that it's a beech tree also a part of the fact that it's a tree, that it is actually growing, - isn't that a part of the fact that it's a tree?

: But it's not thinking about ...

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S: Ah, you don't have to label it as 'beech' complete with the proper Latin name, - you see what it is like; you understand what it is like without necessarily translating that into conventional conceptual terms. It's also a feeling, - you feel the life and growth of the tree as an actual process.

: And you see the sun as that great big orb instead of thinking about it as being a whole pile of gas.

S: Well, it is a pile of gas. (Laughter) That fact that you 'know' that it's just a lot of gas doesn't prevent you from responding to it as something more than that.

: Well, it's like you've brought a heritage of negative things that you've got to break down after you've (Unclear) (S.: Yes) That sort of thing can happen in a very small way actually. You pass something every day of your life and all of a sudden one day you see it in a whole new light. (Pause)

S: Anyway, there's a little bit more to go into before we close.

: Can I just ask something - what is the use of these categories today?

S: What, you mean the practical use here and now? Well, I think just to alert us to the fact that there are a number of different points of departure for the spiritual life. That you mustn't expect everybody else to approach the spiritual life in the same way perhaps that you do and that the people following different approaches may even fall naturally into spiritual families. In other words you have more in common perhaps, at least to begin with, with people who have the same approach to the spiritual life as you, than you have with people who, though getting into the spiritual life, don't approach it in quite the same way as you do. So that awareness should just make us more tolerant and more understanding. That if someone wants to spend most of their time studying the scriptures, well, that's one approach. If someone wants to spend most of their time meditating, that's another approach. Or if someone wants to spend most of his time in India, working perhaps with the ex-Untouchables, well, that's another approach. But they're all approaches to the spiritual life and eventually one achieves a sort of balance between all these different aspects, these different interests. So I think that is the [100] value of it here and now for us. But then a bit more is said about the Cut-off family. This is of some general interest because it makes it clear what does actually cut you off from the spiritual life itself, so let's just go into it - would someone like to read?

Greta: "The 'Cut-off family' are those who according to the great teacher Thogs.med (Asanga) have the six primary characteristics of insolence, shamelessness, mercilessness and so on. His words are:

Seeing the vicious state of Samsara they are not moved;

Hearing of the excellences of the Buddhas they have no confidence;

They have no respect for themselves or others, and no compassion;

They are totally unrepentant, however wicked their lives may be Abounding in these six negative qualities they have no chance of becoming Buddhas."

S: So, "seeing the vicious state of Samsara they are not moved". or rather they have the six primary characteristics of insolence, shame, restlessness and so on. So it goes into that in detail. "Seeing the vicious state of Samsara they are not moved". They see, at least in a manner of speaking, how bad the Samsara is, how much people suffer, how much confusion there is, but they're not moved by that. Not moved by compassion, they're quite hard-hearted. They might take up the newspaper, read about all the wars and all the troubles and all the sufferings that are going on in the world, but they're just not moved. They don't even wish that they could do something to help, they're devoid of compassion.

: You mentioned earlier on that in a sense the Bodhisattvas ...

S: Yes. Well this clearly doesn't apply to the Bodhisattvas, so this is the Cut-off in the ordinary (worldly) sense. The "Hearing of the excellences of the Buddhas they have no confidence". That is to say, they hear about the excellences, they hear about the positive spiritual qualities of the Buddha, that the Buddha is full of wisdom, full of compassion etc., etc., but faith does not arise in them, there is no emotional response in them, or coming from them.

You could say there's no emotional response in them to the Ideal even when the Ideal is presented in very positive terms. They have no respect for themselves or others. They've no respect for themselves because they don't see their own potential so to speak and they don't see the potential of other people. They don't see that they themselves could gain Enlightenment. They don't think highly [101] enough of themselves or of other people and again no compassion. And they are "totally unrepentant however wicked their lives may be" They have no remorse. They're not sorry for anything bad that they've done. And sometimes you find people like this, don't you?

There was a newspaper article recently about the Moors murderess Myra Hindley and all the people who interviewed her, commented on the fact that she seemed to show no remorse for what she'd done.

So this is another quite strange thing, that sometimes people don't regret, they're not sorry for even the very unskilful things that they've done. So this is according to the text, a quality of such people - they've no tendency towards Enlightenment.

: Is this (unclear) because they wouldn't actually be able to cope with the reality of the truth of their action?

S: Well, in that case, this particular person I've mentioned, that point was made in some of the articles that I read that she was unable to face the fact that, that in fact was what she had done. So before you can feel remorse and before you can repent, you must face up to the fact that you did something, that it was your action, that you were responsible. That is sometimes difficult to accept. There's a little saying of Nietzsche's in this connection. It says: "Memory says, 'I did that'. Pride says, 'I could not have done that'. Pride wins!"

: How is that (unclear), paragraph break up into six negative qualities?

S: They're not moved, they're no confidence, no respect for themselves, no respect for others, no compassion, and totally unrepentant, that makes six.

: Isn't compassion the same as the first?

S: It would seem so because the vicious are not moved, not moved to get out of it, you could say. Perhaps it isn't exactly compassion they're not moved to search for something beyond Samsara. So it suggests that whether or not there is such a family as this, so long as one has any of these qualities, one is not moving in the direction of Enlightenment. One has no tendency towards Enlightenment, so for the time being at least, you belong to the Cut-off family.

: It is for the time being though?

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S: Yes. According to Gampopa's interpretation. Though as I said, there were apparently some Yogacarin teachers who believed that there were some beings who were permanently cut-off; who didn't possess the seed of Buddha-hood, and who did not interpret sentient beings as being Bodhisattvas.

Greta: Bhante, at what point in time did the Yogacarin school come into being in comparison with the other two schools?

S: Ah. they're a quite late school. They're usually regarded as coming into existence about the fourth to fifth century AD. That is about eight to nine hundred years after the time of the Buddha.

: I was having an argument with a Roman Catholic girl about the fact that she felt some people were so evil and she used the same example that they had to just be damned for ever and I just became aware that Buddhism doesn't actually give up on anybody.

S: No, Buddhism says even Devadata will one day become a Buddha. But then one might ask the Christian, "Well, why, if there are some people who are immediately evil that they just have to be damned; well who made them?" And also Christians believe that Christ died for all men. So if there are people to whom Christ's saving death does not apply, well, clearly he didn't and couldn't have died for all men and they usually say if there is anyone who is so bad that they cannot avail themselves of the saving grace of Christ as it were. But of course, the Catholics believe that the Devil will never be saved.

There were Christian-theologians very early in the history of the Church, who thought that he might be saved of this particular heresy to that effect, but they were very, very few. They died out. The usual Christian teaching is that the Devil's in Hell and he will remain there for ever and ever with the beings who are damned along with him. Which seems a very terrible sort of teaching. Whereas Buddhism very definitely does teach with the exception of one particular branch of the Yogacara, that everybody will one day, will gain Enlightenment. Not to be interpreted that everyone will during the course of natural evolution - they'd all be carried there willy-nilly whether they want to be Enlightened or not but that the possibility is never entirely closed. That however much you sink, you can recover yourself - maybe with the help of others, with the help of Bodhisattvas, but you can get back on to the path.

(End of Tape 4)

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S: We've seen what the Cut-off family is; we've seen the characteristics of people belonging to the Cut-off family, such as: they've seen the vicious state of Samsara and they're not moved. And then we go on to another description from another source. Would someone like to read that? It's at the bottom of page 3.

"Some are surely working only evil;
Others are defeating positive qualities;
And yet others are without the normal good prospects for liberation;
He who is deficient in positive qualities is devoid of the motive of Buddhahood."

S: Hm. So here the text is describing the people who belong to the "Cut-off" family. Describing what sort of people they are. How one can recognize them. "Some are surely working only evil." The emphasis seems to be on the word 'only'.

But do you think, in fact, that you very often see people of this sort? People who do only evil? Is it conceivable, or does it sometimes happen? Can you imagine anybody, who does no good at all? Or is it to be taken, well, not exactly metaphorically, but as a rather over-emphatic statement? Or is it to be taken quite literally? "Some are surely working only evil".

Marion: You'd think that to be working only evil you'd have to be just as aware of what you were doing as if you were only doing good.

S: Yes. Otherwise you might do good by accident. (Laughter) It's almost a Mara-like being. Almost like the Christian devil or Satan. It's rather difficult to imagine someone "working only evil". I mean, even if you think of the great historical characters who've done a lot of damage, they did have their, as it were, weaker moments. They were liked by, there were individual people they treated quite well, even though they did a great deal of public damage. Maybe they slaughtered like Tamerlain.

Voice: Who was that?

S: Tamerlain was one of the Mongol conquerors in the thirteenth century, who devastated enormous area, burned cities and put whole populations to the sword. "Some are surely working only evil."

Voice: Maybe it's from the point of view of not actually working obvious evil, but actions arising from unskilful states of mind.

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S: Yes, because one might say well, if one's state of mind is basically confused, what good can you do? What does it mean, to do good? Can one be so sure that one ever does 'do good'? I mean your intentions ...

Vajrasuri: It's a difficult word, that word 'good'.

S: Well, I think if one translates it say into, 'skilful', well, that really makes one's situation -

well, I won't say makes it all the more difficult - but it makes it more obvious how difficult it is. Because you might just scrape by, you know, if the word 'good' is used, 'good', you're pretty good, but are you skilful? Well, that seems a much harder test to pass. "Some are surely working only unskilfulness'. Well, if you put it like that, well there seems to be quite a lot of people working only unskilfulness. Well, if one was to be a little cynical, perhaps one might say, well perhaps the greater part of the population of the world is working only unskilfulness. Well, in other words, why else would the world be in such a bad state? But, anyway, I don't think that it's quite that, that the text is getting at. I think that the text probably does mean something nearer to our English word 'evil' , rather than to 'unskilfulness'. But, perhaps we ought to sort of question whether we do as much 'good' or whether we are as skilful as perhaps we like to think. We don't want, of course, to make ourselves feel depressed, but is it so easy to be 'good'? Is it so easy to be skilful? Or aren't we sort of constantly drawn or pulled in the opposite direction? We so easily lose our mindfulness, our awareness. And without awareness it's impossible to be really skilful. What about when you're asleep? Are you being skilful then? What happens to awareness then? (Pause)

Voice: You couldn't work evil while you were asleep though, could you?

S: Well, one might say the sleep state, you know, the state of unawareness is, in a manner of speaking, evil in itself. Because, I mean, isn't it the most unskilful thing to be unaware? So, is not the sleep state a state of unawareness? Or, are you at your best when you are asleep?, (Laughter)

Rosie O: (Unclear) ... have karmic results?

S: Well, if during the sleep state you perform volitions, yes.

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Rosie O: In your mind?

S: Yes. I mean, have you ever had that experience of in your dreamless state of actually deciding to do something? Or in the dream itself? (Pause) Well, presumably, that would have karmic effects, at least, you know as a mental action. And a mental action isn't so serious as a mental action which is accompanied also by a verbal action and bodily action. That makes it very much more serious. But, perhaps, you are responsible for your dreams to the extent that dreams are active experiences, to the extent that they involve volitions.

Rosie O: How does one make one's sleep more skilful?

S: Well, you have to work on the waking state to begin with. I'm sure everybody's noticed that if you go to sleep, go to bed, directly after a Puja or a meditation, you very often have a much better sleep and much better dreams. Whereas suppose, you go to bed straight after a vigorous maybe a heated, maybe a not very friendly argument with somebody, that would have a quite different sort of effect, won't it? So if one does want to effect one's sleep state, or one's dream life, well, one has to work on it, to begin with through the waking state.

Rosie O: Is there a teaching on the dream Bardo?

S: Yes. There are teachings about the dream Bardo. In the dream, well, all sorts of things can

happen. One can even receive spiritual teachings. It depends how attuned to those sort of things your mind is, even during the day. It depends how receptive you are. Well, as I said, if, you know, immediately before you go to sleep you are engaged in overt positive activities, or in a positive mental state, that will affect your sleep; that will affect your dream.

Has anyone experienced this? Well, surely you must have done? Yes? Do you notice it on Retreats, any kind of retreats? Where you've got a meditation and a Puja immediately before you go to bed? I mean, especially when you're observing silence. If you disrupt it by chattering after the Puja, well (unclear) ... but especially if you're silent after the Puja, and remain silent and just go straight to bed, you do feel the effect of the Puja or the meditation, very often in the sleep and dream state. That's one of the reasons for having silence after the Puja and meditation, round until breakfast time the next morning. (Pause)

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Anyway, let's take that as read - "Some are surely working only evil, others are defeating positive qualities". What does one mean by this, do you think? "Others are defeating positive qualities". Which positive qualities? Whose positive qualities?

Voice: Their own?

S: Presumably it's their own to begin with, at least. So, how does one defeat one's positive qualities?

Debbie: Repressing them?

S: Repressing them.

Voice: Or just not developing them.

S: Not developing them. When it says; "defeating positive qualities", it assumes that or suggests that those positive qualities already exist. So it's as though one behaves in such a way as to defeat the very positive qualities that you already have. Do people actually do this do you think? (Voices: Yes.) Yes, they do I'm afraid. How do they do it? In what way do they do it? Can one think of any examples?

Anjali: By not really believing in them?

S: Yes. Not really believing in them.

Rosie Ong: Well, sometimes thinking of doing things and not really doing them?

S: Yes. And maybe, you know, you may find yourself in a very, sort of quiet, peaceful, positive state, but you don't cherish that; you don't protect it. It's almost deliberately that you disrupt it. There's no reason for you to do that; you maybe put on some noisy record or you just go out and do something else. There's the quiet, positive state, that represents a very positive quality, a positive experience, but instead of guarding it and protecting it and prolonging it and developing it, you just break it up. Only too often that sort of thing happens.

Paula: Very much so when you're young. It becomes more precious as you get older. (Pause)

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S: Do you mean that one does it less as one gets older? Or does that sort of thing less?

Paula: You put the noisy records on less often. (Laughter)

S: Well, perhaps you've got other ways of disrupting things. Well, you notice it for instance, sometimes when people are meditating. Sometimes they're having a perfectly good meditation and enjoying it, but something makes them break off and just not go on. One could ascribe it to the gravitational pull. (Pause)

Vajrasuri: Sometimes, it's inappropriate to carry on. Timing ...

S: Well, we're not thinking of that situation. If it's inappropriate to carry on, well, your not carrying on isn't a negative act. But, supposing you have got all the time in the world? So you don't have to break off. There's nothing else to do. But nonetheless, you do break off; you don't just carry on meditating. Even though you're having a good meditation. It seems so strange and paradoxical, but this is very often what we do. So, in this way we defeat, or we are defeating our own positive qualities.

Vajrasuri: People often put themselves down, too. They depreciate their own actions - their own thoughts. (Pause)

S: Yes, and what about defeating the positive qualities of others? Does that happen? Do we do that? Sometimes? Well, sometimes we don't appreciate the positive qualities of others. We don't rejoice in them. This is why the 'Rejoicing in Merits' is so important. Or if sometimes, we ourselves are not feeling in a very positive mood and we meet somebody who is in a very positive mood, instead of allowing them to bring us up we try to pull them down very often. We almost resent the fact that they're feeling so positive and happy. "What is it, Oh yes, Oh you're pretty chirpy this morning, aren't you?" (Laughter) As though they were committing some kind of an offence. In this way we defeat their positive qualities. With some people you can feel them doing this all the time. They're always trying to pull you down a bit, always nibbling away, or chipping away at your positivity. They want to pull you down into their own little private hell. (Laughter) So that they can be, you know, so that you can all be miserable there together. (Laughter) They get some kind of satisfaction from this. So you have to be very careful that you [108] don't do this. Just let people pull you up, don't try to pull them down, if you are in a rather negative state.

So, "others are defeating positive qualities" - either their own or other people's. Perhaps it isn't necessary to speak in terms of one's own positive qualities, or other people's positive qualities. It's just a question of positive qualities. I mean, if there are any positive qualities around, whether your own or whether other people's that doesn't matter very much. Mind, you know, that you don't try and defeat them. (Pause) True positivity, in any case, can't really be claimed as anyone's personal possession. Just try to add to the sum of positivity in the world, not to decrease it.

Anjali: Does that mean that negative qualities aren't anybody's personal possession either, Bhante?

S: Well, in a sense not. Because one saw that towards the end of the Bodhicaryavatara, yes?

Though there it was discussed more in terms of suffering. But, don't think in terms of getting rid of your suffering, or other people's suffering, just suffering. Whatever suffering there is, whose ever suffering it happens to be just try and get rid of it. In the same way, with the negative qualities even, whether you own or other people's, just try to get rid of them. No doubt the approach will be different in the case of your own negative qualities and the negative qualities of other people. Perhaps you have to be just a little more cautious in approaching other people's negative qualities. But it's as though you see the negativity impersonally, yes? You also recognize a responsibility for other people's negativity. If other people are in a negative state, well, you've just as much responsibility to try to get rid of that negativity as you have for your own negative states. (Pause)

Daphne (Padmavati): I suppose it's because we see them as 'mine' and 'yours' that we tend to put people down, because we see in them something we haven't got.

S: Yes, right. Yes, if other people have positive qualities, it's a really good thing, that positive qualities do exist in the world. They're not, those positive qualities don't just belong to those people, so it's not just a question of being envious because they've got these positive qualities and we haven't. Positive qualities belong to everybody. They affect everybody. They help everybody. They are just like the scent of the incense stick, you know, it [109] it pervades everywhere. That's why we rejoice in merit.

Vajrasuri: It's very difficult to live around people who are negative. It seems the negative energy is stronger than one's own positive energy.

S: Yes, it can be very wearing. Very often you don't realize it until you move away for a bit. If you've been around negative people for a few days, or a few weeks, or a few months, you sort of, well get used to it and you don't realize how it is wearing you down. You realize how it has worn you down only after you part from them and either get on your own, or get with more positive people.

Rosie O: How does it actually wear you down?

S: Well, you're having to resist it all the time. You're having to resist it having an effect on you, and that takes a lot of energy. So a lot more of your energy is going into resisting something instead of into expressing itself in a way that might be natural to it. It's quite literally like bearing a burden. If you're having to carry a great heavy weight, you can't sing and dance. So another person's negativity can affect you in that sort of way. All your energy, or a lot of your energy is going in bearing this burden and just holding it up so it just doesn't crush you and you've very little energy left over for your own independent life, so to speak. (Pause)

Rosie Ong: In the same way your own negativity is draining. How does the energy actually get lost?

S: When you're being worn down by someone ...

Rosie O: By your own negativity.

S: By your own. How does the energy get lost? Well, give us a concrete example. Supposing,

well, you're sad and downcast - what has made you sad and downcast? Perhaps, you've lost something. Perhaps you've had a disappointment. Why has that made you feel sad and downcast? Well, you must look into that. One has to ask oneself well, have I really lost something? Why am I clinging on to it? Is it worth clinging on to? Can't I let go? " One tries to understand what is happening in that sort of way. What is the cause, what is the source of one's negative state? Why is one putting energy into [110] that sort of state. Why one is allowing oneself to feel that sort of state. Sometimes you know, people hang on to their negative states. Sometimes one might have the experience of, say, someone coming to see you and maybe they've got some trouble or some woe, or some difficulty and you try to point out to them, well, "The situation isn't so bad; look at this factor, look at that. It isn't so bad after all." But no, they won't have it. They won't let you talk them out of their misery. Oh, no! (Laughter) They insist on hanging on to it. One can feel the resistance. They don't want to give up their misery.

Rosie Ong: Why do you think that is?

S: Why do you think that is?

Voice: It seems really strange when you put it like that.

S: Well, it is what happens, isn't it? Well, it's really that they don't want to accept, well, one could say, the facts ... don't want to accept life as it is, They insist on having it their way. I mean, very often, these sort of mental states are bound up with relationships with other people. You say, well, why should he do that? Or why should she do that? I've got a right to be angry about that. You sort of hang on to your negativity in that way. "They shouldn't have done that. They shouldn't have behaved in that way. I've a perfect right to be angry, I've a right to be upset. Of course I'm miserable!" (Laughter) "What else can you expect? That's what they've done to me." That is the attitude, yes? Really, it is because you insist on being right.

Vajrapushpa: You also see a similar thing in people who have been ill for many years. They just won't be cured; don't want to be cured. They may see doctors and do something about it, but really what it comes down to is they don't want to.

S: Well, yes. It's a very similar thing, because you hear of people who say, "Oh, I've been to so many doctors. I've been to 30 doctors but not one of them could cure me". You know, they say it [with] a sort of satisfaction. (Laughter) As though they've defeated the doctor. I mean, I myself, have had the experience with, well, similar experience with people who say, "I've gone to so many people with my problem. I've gone to psychoanalysts and wise religious people, [111] not one of them could solve my problem and now I've come to you. I'm sure you can solve it for me!" (Laughter) But it's a trap. (Laughter) They want you to try to solve their problems for them, but they've actually made up their minds, well in advance, that they're not going to actually let you solve it. And you can't solve it without their co-operation. So, of course, if you walk into the trap and set about trying to solve their problem for them, you're lost. So they go away adding you to their list of people who haven't been able to solve it. (Laughter) But what you have to do in circumstances like this, you know, in case any such person ever comes to you, is to disclaim any ability to solve their problem in advance. Say, "Oh well, if so many people have been unable to solve your problem, it's highly unlikely that I am going to be able to solve it.". That will really floor them. They'll be quite disappointed. If

you adopt that sort of attitude, you've caught them out. Well, yes, they're hanging on to things, on to their problems, just as some people hang on to their illness, to their disease. They're using it, as a sort of weapon almost. Winning is important for them. In other words, their own way, their own will. This is what it really boils down to.

It's just like a child. Just like the small child. Another child takes away its toy, all right, you give it another toy, exactly the same as the first one, but will it have it? No. It wants the first one, even though the two are identical. It insists on having the first one. It wants its own way. So, a lot of human beings, even when they're grown up you know, are like that. It isn't easy, you know, when people have really decided to cling on to their negativity to get them to relax their grip on it.

Paula: It can be a way of drawing attention, too, can't it?

S: Yes. You have to be careful about that one. Sometimes people [are] demanding simply attention to it so that they can have the pleasure of rejecting it. (Laughter) You know, you mustn't walk into that trap either. So you need to be quite skilful in dealing with people. Aware of all the little tricks they can get up to.

Linda: But it's hard to do it skilfully, without being cynical about it. If someone genuinely has got a problem, and not sort of dismissing them and saying "Oh well, so and so's just in a negative state of mind, wanting a bit of sympathy and attention

S: Yes. But if people are in a negative state of any kind, and if [112] you are not really able to help them, it's better just to stay clear, and leave them to their own devices. Perhaps they will come round sooner or later. But, if you just get involved and you become negative too, and you are pulled down too, that just makes things worse. Perhaps they get a perverse satisfaction out of succeeding in pulling you down but that isn't really any kind of positivity. Better to leave them to it and another thing, you mustn't allow people to, sort of, get into the way, or you mustn't allow yourself to get into the way of gaining attention through negativity. You have to, sort of, recondition people, and teach them that they'll get attention when they're positive - not when they're negative.

Rosie A: You do that in educational training when you're learning to be a teacher. They teach you, you've got to give positive affirmation and encourage the positive and don't dwell on the negative.

S: Yes. Otherwise, it's the naughty child who gets all the attention. So, of course, what is the message, loud and clear: if you want to get attention, be naughty! So it's the same with people in general. You mustn't let them get into the habit of thinking, well, the only way that they can get attention from you, is by being in a really negative state or having a real problem. Otherwise people will think up problems, manufacture problems, and bring them to you, just so that they can get a bit of attention.

Rosie Ong: You said "hang on to negativity" as if negativity is something which doesn't stay with you. Something which is not natural, to human beings, contrasting with positivity.

S: Well, what does one mean by natural? You know, it's natural in a sense that, well, it very frequently occurs whether it's part of an ideal human nature, that's another matter. One could

say that positivity was an element in an ideal human nature, and negativity no doubt not. So, in a sense, negativity is extraneous in a sense the defilements do come from outside. That's why don't you feel more truly yourself when you're in a positive state, than when you're in a negative state, when you're in a really negative state, whatever your justifications? There's also a sense of 'wrongness' about it. Whatever satisfaction you may get from being in that negative state it doesn't really feel 'right'. It feels even sometimes very wrong. But when you're in a highly positive state, well, that feels right, it feels natural, it feels proper. I mean, people may ask, "why do [113] I suffer?" "Why do I feel miserable?" But they very rarely ask, if ever, "Why am I so happy?" I mean, happiness is not a problem. So that does suggest that happiness is the more natural state. (Pause)

Anyway, "others are defeating positive qualities; and yet others are without the normal good prospects for liberation". What does that suggest? It's the normal thing for a human being to have good prospects for liberation, good prospects for Enlightenment. That's the normal state of affairs. Enlightenment should be something to which you can look forward, and reasonably expect. Because, here you are, you've come so far. You're a human being, you're in contact with the teaching; you have spiritual friends; you have time and health and leisure, opportunity. Well, why on earth shouldn't you gain Enlightenment? Maybe not this year, or even next year, but in the course of this lifetime. Why should you not get very near to it at least? (Pause)

Vajrasuri: Sounds reasonable (Laughter)

S: Well, what gives you, I mean, we've mentioned some of them, but what gives you these normal good prospects for liberation? To a great extent, it's the conditions under which you live. So what sort of people, do you think, "are without the normal good prospects for liberation?" Can you think of some conditions which make it very difficult to think in those sorts of terms? Very basic, simple ones?

Voice: Ill health. (S: Ill health)

Dhammadinna: Mental deficiency. (S: Mental deficiency)

Debbie: It depends on the country you were born into.

S: Yes. Perhaps there is no spiritual teaching prevailing there, no spiritual tradition, no Dharma.

Vajrasuri: Struggle for existence.

S: Struggle for existence. Yes. Maybe war, maybe social and political upheavals, maybe epidemics, famines, fire, flood. You know, all those sorts of natural disasters.

Voice: Or persecution if you do happen to ...

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S: Persecution. Yes. But it's quite a thought that if society, if the society in which one lives, is reasonably well organized, and if one's culture is such that there is some knowledge of the spiritual life, if there is a spiritual tradition, if one is in contact with the Dharma, and if one

has such things as health, time, leisure, then one normally has good prospects for liberation. So, this is, as it were, taking quite an optimistic view of human potential.

Debbie: It really means that you have to make the most of the situation that you are in.

S: Yes. This is something I've become particularly conscious of, after coming back from India, yes? Because in India I was with our or mainly with our Ex-untouchable Buddhist friends, who have to live, work, and practice under much more difficult conditions than we do. But, they really make much more of their opportunities than most people do in our Movement, in this country at least.

Debbie: In what way do they make more of them? Do they just kind of strive more and work harder?

S: I think they do strive more and work harder. That is to say, those who are in relatively close contact with us, with the FWBO there. For instance, they, many of them, make much more of an effort to meditate regularly. Don't forget, most of them, if not all of them, with very, very few exceptions, are people with full-time jobs and with families. Living in small houses, some of which we would regard as huts. Yes? Sometimes in very, very small flats with perhaps eight, ten or twelve other people, in a very, sort of circumscribed space, with quite a lot of noise and disturbance around. Not only within the house, but outside. But they keep up their regular meditation practice and they keep it up quite well. They do no worse, certainly some of them do better than people do in this country who are living under much more propitious conditions. I mean, the people, for instance who live around the LBC in Bethnal. Maybe they think they've got quite a low standard of living, that they live very simply under quite poor conditions, but many of our friends in India would regard that as luxury, and comfort. The fact that you actually have a room to yourself, a whole room, of your own! Or maybe you share it with just one other person. Well, they usually share the room with 8 or 10 other people. So you would be regarded as living, well, if not in luxury, certainly in comfort. And you know, with no problem about food. You eat every day. You've never starved in your life. [115] You've not gone a single day of your life without food, but there's quite a lot of people in the world, you know, who have had the experience of going without food for the day, maybe for a number of days. And also there's insecurity, economic insecurity. There's no welfare state; there's no dole. There are no benefits, no allowances. If you're out of work, well, you're out of work. You've no income and work isn't easy to get. If you lose your job, your whole family faces starvation. But, people make the most of their opportunities - those people who are in contact with us. They take the opportunity of going on retreat if they possibly can. If they can't go on retreat - if a retreat is being held, it's either because some member of the family is sick and they have to look after them, or they just haven't got the money, and very often they don't have the money; even though, there, we charge for retreats, I think, about 30p a day ... the equivalent. Often people can't afford that. So a lot of people we have to sponsor. We have to pay for them to go on retreat, including Order members. They can't afford the 30p per day, it's beyond their means. But if they possibly can, they go.

But, you know, very often in this country people have the opportunity to go on retreat, and they say, "Well, I don't know about going on retreat, I don't think I quite fancy it, you know, this week. I might go and have a stroll in the country, and listen to a few records when I get back", and that's their attitude. No, there, they don't think in those sort of terms at all. If they

can possibly go on retreat they go. They get so much out of it. They appreciate it so much. Though here, we tend to have things, sort of 'laid on'. You know when things are 'laid on', unfortunately one very often doesn't appreciate them, quite so much. I mean, maybe some of you have come from places where facilities aren't laid on to such an extent, so maybe, when you come here you appreciate the facilities that are available a bit more than do those who just have them, can enjoy them, all the time. So very often we don't make full use of our opportunities. (Pause)

You know, for instance, a century ago or more, in this country, there was a great demand for education and a lot of people weren't getting education. Well, now everybody's got it or has access to it. They don't seem to value it all that much. You know, a hundred years ago children would have regarded the opportunity of going to school, as an absolute privilege. They wouldn't have missed it if they could possibly have gone, but it's like that in India to some extent. Not that the educational system is really all that great. But now, you know, in this country, children don't value the opportunity. I'm leaving aside of course, the value of the education. That's quite a different question. But, at least it gives you access to knowledge, even if it doesn't give you the knowledge itself.

Someone was telling me down in London only the other day, someone came to see me. He left school at 16, unable to read or write. Well, he could [116] read just a little bit, but he couldn't write at all, at sixteen! (Pause) So there is this unfortunate fact that, very often, we don't make use of our opportunities. Maybe we don't realize the urgency of the situation. We never realize that the situation could change. Suppose, for instance, if unfortunately, there was a World War tomorrow, or next week. Well, what would happen? Our whole lives would be disrupted. Maybe we couldn't go on retreat, couldn't go abroad. Wouldn't be able to meditate. Then we'd start appreciating what it was that we'd lost. Well, now that we've got it, maybe we don't appreciate it. We think it'll always be there; we'll always have the opportunity. Well, we can always go on retreat any time we like. But can we? Apart from that we're getting older. When you're young you can do a lot more than when you're older. You've got the energy, you've got the health, you've got the strength. These things may not always be with you. So we should take serious stock of the situation; make best use of our opportunities, while we have them. Because at present, certainly in the case of those who are in fact with, who are part and parcel of the FWBO, your prospects for liberation are very good. In some ways they could hardly be better. (End of Side A)

S: "He who is deficient in positive qualities is devoid of the motive of Buddhahood." What does this suggest about positive qualities?

Voice: You need them as a basis, to start ...

S: You do need them as a basis, yes. It's as though the positive qualities are the basis on which you develop the motive of Buddhahood. It's difficult to imagine, say, someone who is emotionally negative, developing a motive of Buddhahood on purely, so to speak, intellectual grounds.

So emotional positivity, positive qualities are very, very important. This is one of the reasons why we emphasize, why we give so much attention to the Metta Bhavana. So, according to the Mahayana Sutta Lankara, these are all qualities of people who belong to the Cut-off family. That is to say, 'they are surely working only evil; they're defeating positive qualities.'

They don't have the normal good prospects for liberation and, you know, they are deficient in positive qualities and therefore, devoid of the motive of Buddhahood. But then Gampopa goes on to say that,

"But even those who are thus characterized and said to form the Cut-off family, because their minds have been intent on wandering in Samsara for a long time, are not people who will never be able to attain Enlightenment. They would do so if they would only exert themselves."

In other words, that there's hope for all. I mean, the statement, "their minds have been intent on wandering in Samsara for a long time", is interesting. It's as though they've got into the habit of being cut-off.

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It's quite interesting that one notices something of this sort in the case of some people, who say, come along to a centre. You notice the different reactions of the different people. You know, some people when they make contact with the centre, well, they take to it immediately. Yes? There's a very positive response. They want to come again and again at once. But other people, they make that contact, but, it's as though it's very difficult for them to take advantage of that. They're so, sort of set in their existing ways that they can't take advantage of the opportunity that they now have. Perhaps they even want to in a way, but they don't really know how to go about it. They don't seem able to grasp that it's really quite simple - that you just come again and again. That seems a very difficult thing for them to do. Some of them seem to need to think it over quite a lot and even then they're not quite sure what to do. Something seems to be, as we say, holding them back. Well, perhaps, it's just that they've got into the habit of being out of contact with whatever it is that the centre represents. They're just not used to that sort of thing. They've been intent, perhaps, in wandering in Samsara for a long time.

A Voice: It's extraordinary how you can talk to somebody who's come for the first time, and really enjoyed it, and you know, wants to come again, and then you don't see them any more.

S: Yes, yes. Well. sometimes there are other reasons too. If they're involved in a lot of other things, and especially if they're young they're easily distracted, easily forget. I mean, it's quite easy in the midst of many distractions to forget even your own genuine experience. I mean, you can go away on retreat and you can have really good meditations, maybe every day, but a few weeks later, you've forgotten, you've lost touch with that, you've no real recollection of that. It's almost as though it hadn't happened. And you almost start doubting whether such a thing as meditation is possible at all. You're as out of touch as that. Out of touch with your own past experience. So, it's quite understandable that someone might come along to the centre, have a really positive experience, but not come again. Not because they didn't want to come again, but because, well, circumstances have prevented them; have kept them away, for say 2 or 3 weeks, and that's long enough for them to be able to forget what the actual original experience was like. (Pause)

Vajrasuri: Some people are frightened actually, frightened of the experiences they gain in meditation; frightened at the experiences of the happiness, and don't believe it and think that it's a sham or a put on case. They're so paranoid it almost as though they're experiencing two things at the same time: The positive happiness which they're responding to - they go [118]

away and within half an hour or an hour, it dissipates, that happiness into fear and projections about, oh, is this all, that they say. It's as if something in their mind just doesn't allow them to see things that are really just straightforward, in just a straightforward way. (Pause)

S: Then follows a rather odd little quotation. Would somebody like to read that?

Ratnadakini: "Ananda, if a man without the good fortune of being able to attain Nirvana should throw only a flower up into the sky, when he has seen the Buddha, he would be endowed with the fruit of passing into Nirvana. I call him bordering on, approaching Nirvana."

S: It's not easy to see what the drift of this really is because this quotation comes with reference, apparently to Gampopa's discussion of the Cut-off family. Can anybody make head or tail of it? "Ananda, if a man without the good fortune of being able to attain Nirvana" presumably a member of the Cut-off family, "should throw only a flower up into the sky" perhaps by way of worship? Perhaps that's what the text is getting at. "When he has seen the Buddha he would be endowed with the fruit of passing into Nirvana, by bordering on, approaching Nirvana". It's as if to say, only a very small thing, is enough to get you started.

Voice: If there's just one response, just one positive response, it will break the deadlock.

Debbie: It's like a spontaneous response, before he conditions it by ...

Voice: It seems almost like an act of joy, doesn't it?

S: To throw a flower up into the sky - it doesn't say whether as an offering to a Buddha or not - presumably as a sort of offering. There is a verse in the Saddharmapundarika Sutra which says that, you know, even if you offer a flower, you're sure of final Enlightenment, because you've taken the first step. Yes? And if you've taken one step you can take another and so on.

Greta: In fact this verse is quite uplifting ... because this man, without having thought about it, has just spontaneously done this and it has brought his chances quite a bit higher.

S: Yes. So it says, "when he has seen the Buddha", presumably after he has thrown the flower up into the sky, well, the whole sequence of events follows, culminating in his actually seeing the Buddha, a whole sequence maybe of spiritual practises, of experiences and as a result of that he [119] sees the Buddha, has a vision of the Buddha, and by that time he has come very near to the goal. But it all started from just tossing a flower into the air. We do know that that is people's experience. Sometimes they come into contact with a Centre and in a way, quite casually. A friend says: "Oh come along. I'm going to that Buddhist Centre. Let's just go and have a look at it". And so, in a half-serious sort of a way, or maybe not in a serious way at all, you just come along and have a look in and you don't really consider staying . Maybe you think you're going to stay for just half an hour and then go away, just for a joke, just for a laugh. But, no, you stay - you stay the whole evening, and you really enjoy it and ...

Dhammadinna: Stay the rest of your life. (Laughter)

S: Yes. It can happen like that. So, you know, you go along to the Centre much as someone just tosses a flower into the sky - not really very seriously.

Linda: Is that how it's actually meant, like that - you actually throw a flower up into the sky and then that you see the Buddha sequentially, not that you throw a flower up into the sky in response to ...

S: No, no. I mean it doesn't say anything about your seeing the Buddha first. It says you just throw a flower up into the sky. Well, taking that quite literally it would seem to suggest that, well, in a sort of happy mood one day, you just throw a flower into the sky, maybe with some thought of the Buddha, but then that releases ...

Voice: You could read it that way. (S: Which way?) "should throw a flower up into the sky, when he has seen the Buddha".

S: Ah, yes, but on the other hand if you belong to the Cut-off family and this verse does, is quoted with reference to the Cut-off family, you'd be unlikely to see the Buddha. So that suggests, though I agree grammatically that it is ambiguous - but it seems more likely that you just toss the flower up into the sky without having seen the Buddha, without anything having happened at all as yet, but that, you know, starts things off. It sets off a whole sequence of events.

Voice: Just a sort of response to beauty.

S: Hmm. Yes, maybe. Maybe you just feel happy, you feel a bit positive. You know at the back of your mind maybe there is this sort of idea, or the [120] consciousness that throwing a flower is an act or worship. Maybe you don't think about it very clearly or definitely but you sort of know that it's an act or worship of the Buddha. So the result is that sooner or later, you see the Buddha. By that time, well, you're quite near to Enlightenment, quite near to Nirvana. It's like being at the end of the string of the golden ball, that Blake talks about, yes?

He says, "I give you the end of a golden string and only wind it into a ball", etc. ,etc. Well, it's like that. You just have to keep on winding.

All right, let's go on to the Dubious family now. Would someone like to read that?

Debbie: "The 'Dubious-family' are those whose future way of life depends on certain conditions. Those who rely on a spiritual friend who is a Sravaka, or who are friends and acquaintances of one and believe in the Sravaka way of life after they have perused the Sravaka-sutras, will become members of that family and disclose themselves as such. Similarly when they meet a Pratyekabuddha or a follower of the Mahayana way of life they will become respectively either Pratyekabuddhas or followers of the Mahayana way of life."

S: So, it's as though there are two kinds of people. There are people who've got a very definite kind of inner direction themselves; who have a definite inner direction towards one particular aspect or another of the spiritual life. But then there are others who have no particular direction. They've got a general direction towards the spiritual life, but the particular form it takes depends very much upon the people that they come into contact with; the spiritual friends that they come into contact with. Do you see what I mean?

To give an example one might say, well, there are sometimes people you find who have a definite, almost innate tendency say, towards Zen, Zen specifically. Not just Buddhism, but

Zen Buddhism specifically. Others with a specific tendency towards Tibetan Buddhism or to Theravada. But there are other people with just a tendency towards Buddhism and whether they take up Zen or whether they take up Tibetan Buddhism or Theravada, it just depends on what sort of people, what sort of group they happen to come into contact with. So the difference is like that.

But, of course, there is a sort of assumption here that it's a sort of 'either or'. In the light of the teaching of the Saddharmapundarika one might question that. Hmm? Do you see what I mean? Is it really a question of either following the Sravaka way, or the Pratyekabuddha way or the Mahayana Bodhisattva way? Is it really a question of following either the one or the other? Is there not one Ekayana, spiritual path? And at one time [121] one aspect of that path may attract you at another time, another aspect may because the different aspects of the path, you know, corresponds to the different aspects of the process of your own self-development.

Vajrasuri: Would it be that some form or other of the path, reflection or meditation, that is the stream that runs through all of those? So that you're attracted to this one aspect and whichever one is dominant in that group, well, that's your way for that time. At another time it may have been another form of creative mind

S: Yes, because one knows that one's sources of spiritual interest do change from time to time. It's as though you feel, well, "I've worked enough on that aspect for the time being. Let me work on another aspect". One does find that sort of thing reflected in, for instance, one's attraction to say, this or that Bodhisattva. For a while you may be very much drawn to the figure of Padmasambhava and Padmasambhava may loom very large in your spiritual consciousness. But say, after two or three years, Padmasambhava may seem to recede a bit. It's not that you give him less importance than before, but somehow he doesn't seem quite so relevant. You don't feel him so strongly and you see, maybe, the figure of Tara sort of dawning on the spiritual horizon.

The figure of Tara fascinates you more - you're more drawn towards that. It's as though Tara represents another aspect of the spiritual life which you now have to develop. It's as though it's very difficult for one single figure to embody all the different aspects fully. I mean, all the different figures, all the different Bodhisattvas. They add up to one figure ultimately, but it's very difficult for you to see all those different figures as one figure Even if, you usually see, well, now Padmasambhava, now Tara, now Manjusri and so on. In the end, no doubt, one sees them all as one sort of multifaceted figure, each facet of course, being another figure.

Rosie Ong: (unclear) figure?

S: Well, one could say the Sambhogakaya - that is the Sambhogakaya.

Rosie O: But it's not represented as a figure.

S: Well, that would be very difficult. It might even seem grotesque, if you were to try to represent or even to think of a figure made up of other figures. You know, you require another dimension to do that properly, yes?

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Vajrasuri: It's a bit easier if you get into the colour. So the colour symbolizes different figures

and then you can put the colours to the figures.

S: Yes. Or you could have a single figure with a rainbow aura. (Pause) So, yes, to come back to this particular scheme, to this particular classification, sometimes you may feel a bit Sravaka-like. That is to say, you don't want to have much to do with people. You want to get on with your meditation. You want to have a solitary retreat. Maybe you think you'd like to be a hermit for a while. Maybe you're even a bit fed-up with people. You know, they're becoming a bit of a nuisance. They're always interfering and always noisy and demanding. So you start feeling really sympathetic towards the Arhant ideal. You think well, to be an Arhant and just be away from it all and with no passions and no disturbances, and just to be really peaceful and just to live in a little cave, you know, and just have one meal a day and just sit there and meditate and reflect. That would be really wonderful. Sometimes maybe you do really feel drawn to that sort of life. (Laughter)

Voice: Often.

S: Then on some other occasion you might think, well, there's so much suffering in the world, and one mustn't think of oneself. One must do what one can for others. It would be a really wonderful thing to go about preaching the Dharma. Yes? Look what Lokamitra's doing in India, you know. Working amongst all those Ex-Untouchables. "Well, how can I just think of, you know, sitting in a cave quietly and meditating when there's all that work to be done". And you might feel, well, "there's all those people who really need the Dharma"! I mean "I really ought to be doing something to help to bring the Dharma to them. I ought to be giving talks, and I ought to be taking classes at the Centre". So that in that way, you get more into the Bodhisattva path for a while.

Then maybe you go all Tantric. (Laughter) You want to be a Dakini. You start thinking, "Well, no, I don't want to go and meditate in a cave. I don't want to help around the Centre. I just want to sort of throw off all my clothes and dance on the hills and just play around and have wild music and just liberate all my energies and all that sort of thing." Well, that's a sort of ideal that might appeal to you - you want to be a glorious pagan for a while. You see what I mean? You get into different things at different times. You work on different aspects of the spiritual life. (Laughter) Oh, dear, have I started... (Unclear) ... (Laughter)

Voice: What if you want to do them all at the same time though?

[123]

S: Well, then you're just being difficult. (Laughter) Because you can't do them all at the same time. I mean, that is unfortunate because maybe you do feel like that. Sometimes you feel, almost equally the claims of all these different ideals, all these different aspects of yourself. You would like to do them all at the same time. But it's impossible. You can't sit in a cave and meditate and at the same time be running a Centre and at the same time be dancing in the moonlight or whatever. It isn't possible.

So that you have to strike an overall balance, you know, in the course of your life. So that you end up a reasonably all-round developed spiritual person. No doubt as you do mature and develop spiritually, these things will come much more together, and will seem less contradictory than they do at the beginning. (Pause) All right. let's go on to the Sravaka family now.

Voice: "The 'Sravaka family' are those who are afraid of Samsara, yearn for Nirvana and have little compassion. As has been said about them:
Having seen the miser of Samsara they become afraid
And yearn for Nirvana;
They do not delight in working for the benefit of sentient beings;
Endowed with these three characteristics is the Sravaka family."

S: So, it's as I sort of indicated. It isn't that one opts to belong to the Sravaka family, indefinitely, but the Sravaka ideal sort of represents perhaps a mood that you can feel, that you can experience, or even an actual phase of your spiritual life and development. You're very conscious of the misery of the Samsara. You're very conscious that there's a lot of pain and suffering in the world, and you take that seriously. You don't want to get any more involved. You really do yearn for a state, for the transcendental where there is no more pain and suffering. You think very much in those terms and you're not especially interested in working for the benefit of other living beings. You feel the pain of the Samsara so strongly that you just want to get out of it as quickly as you can and that may be a mood which you experience from time to time. (Pause)

Perhaps it is better and more helpful to regard these families as sort of representing these phases of spiritual life, rather than as ideals to which you must permanently commit yourself. You pass through all these phases from time to time. You, perhaps, re-pass through, in as much as they represent different aspects of the spiritual life which you work on from time to time. Well, let's say for example, when you go away to Vajraloka, well, maybe the Arhant ideal is more appropriate then, the Sravaka's. Then there's not much point in your cherishing the Sravaka ideal or being in your Sravaka phase, when you are supposed to be helping to run a Centre. [124] Then you need to be more in a Bodhisattva phase.

Dhammadinna: Well, if you find, if you've committed yourself to one course of action and another phase comes up, you've got to decide whether it's a strong desire ... (S: A genuine phase ...) or if you're trying to escape.

S: Right, yes, well ...

Dhammadinna: You might decide to commit yourself to a Centre for five years and then discover that that isn't actually what you ...

S: Well, you: have to be sure that you know yourself, before you commit yourself. You shouldn't commit yourself wildly or recklessly or irresponsibly or lightly. But if, after serious thought you've committed yourself, well, then you should honour that commitment, especially if it involves other people; especially if you've made an explicit or implicit promise to other people. Then you have to honour that. So people shouldn't commit themselves without serious thought. This is why I have said, in the past that those who are Mitras shouldn't be asked to commit themselves for any great length of time to any particular project. I mean, that isn't fair, because they don't yet really know themselves well enough, they're not really in a position to commit themselves in that sort of way. If they were, well, presumably they would have been ordained already. (pause)

So you have to really know yourself, to be able to commit yourself, deeply for any length of time. I mean, when I say 'any length of time', I mean three years, four years, five years and so

on. (pause)

Dhammadinna: When we were coming up in the car and we were talking about businesses and you said people seemed to find it hard to stick to things, and to certain kinds of business - demands a certain kind of energy and phase and mode, which can come in conflict with other desires, to meditate or just study.

S: Well, I was thinking especially of relatively new people, whether they are just friends or whether they are Mitras, especially new Mitras. You know, maybe they're still shopping around. They're not shopping around as regards spiritual groups, maybe; they've decided that the FWBO is for them but maybe within the FWBO they may still be shopping around. They may not yet realize or may not yet understand whether they want to meditate more, or study more or whether they really need to work. So one should be very careful that one doesn't inveigle, you know, any such person, into committing himself or into committing herself for any great length of time to a particular project, whatever it may be, before they've really understood what [125] they want to do. Do you see what I mean? Otherwise, somebody's just been around for a few months and there you are, getting them to sign on the dotted line that they're going to work in your Co-op for the next five years. Well, that isn't really fair. That's the sort of thing I have in mind. You may need someone in your business; you may need someone to commit themselves for the next five years, but it isn't fair to ask someone who has just started to come along to do that. They may be willing to do so. They may think that they want to do so, but perhaps he or she, doesn't really know, his or her mind well enough to be able to take that step, and you must be able to see that even if they can't; you as the more experienced and responsible person. So you should say "all right, well, try for 3 months; try for 6 months, that is reasonable". But not to encourage them to commit themselves at that very early stage to a particular project for a number of years, because as they get more deeply into things, as they start meditating well, almost anything could happen. They might want to spend a few years in solitude, or in meditation or study. They might want to go off to India, or whatever. It's very easy, you know, to commit yourself, or appear to commit oneself to something, under the influence of what is if not a passing mood, at least a temporary phase of one's development. I've seen this happen many and many a time. Sometimes people's phases last about six months. So, if your phases normally last about six months, you mustn't commit yourself to a particular project for say, 10 years (Laughter) But on the other hand, as you get more and more deeply into things both individually and collectively, so to speak, well, it is to be expected that you do gradually commit yourself to some particular line, to some particular project, some particular aspect. But you should be quite sure, reasonably sure, you know, before you take that step. Anybody had that sort of experience? Of committing themselves, you know, (in inverted commas) "prematurely"? Or are you too circumspect, too cautious?

Voice: I think having faith is a pretty big commitment.

S: Yes, I suppose that there is something that you have to think about quite seriously. You can't change your mind after two months can you? You can't even change your mind after five years, or even after ten years really. So you should think seriously, quite a few people go into this sort of thing rather lightly, don't they, rather light-heartedly without really thinking it out. (pause)

Linda: I think it's hard if you're not thinking in terms of committing yourself, sometimes you sort of get into a habit so fast, of like, you might go into something, start doing something and

think "well, I'm trying [126] it for a few months, but you get into a pattern so quickly that it's very hard to change, to sort of stay open, and be aware of what you're doing.

S: Well, this is where your spiritual friends come, or should come in. I mean those with whom you are in contact, who are more experienced than you are and can, perhaps, point out to you things that you haven't noticed, can point out to you, perhaps that you're getting into a rut, that you're taking your work too seriously - well, too seriously in the wrong sense. You're becoming a bit blind, and a bit blinkered to everything else that is going on and you almost start thinking that packing beans is the sum and stuff of the spiritual life (Laughter). It can happen.

Linda: You mean it isn't? (Laughter)

S: No, because you could pack nuts. (Laughter)

Dhammadinna: You could change your whole life and pack dried fruit next year! (Laughter)

S: But it isn't an easy matter. I mean, it isn't always easy to know whether you are just being fickle and restless, or whether you genuinely need now to tackle some other type of activity, some other aspect of spiritual life.

Dhammadinna: You don't commit yourself to a static entity, do you? You might commit yourself to a certain line of action, a certain involvement, but that situation may change you know, as well as you. So that it's not actually the right place for you any more or you're not working on it in quite the right way, so it is quite complicated.

S: Yes, the situation to which you originally committed yourself may no longer really exist. I mean, you may have committed yourself to a particular business. When you committed yourself to it, it was perhaps a small easily manageable business involving two or three people. Now, perhaps, it's a big complex, difficult to keep track of, involving 20 or 30 people. It's only technically the same situation. (pause) All right, then, go on to the Pratyekabuddha family:

Paula: "The 'Pratyekabuddha family' are those who in addition to these three characteristics are very arrogant, keep silent about their teachers and like to live alone in solitude. As has been said:

Shaken by Samsara they run after Nirvana;

They have little compassion and are extremely conceited:

They keep silent about their teachers and like to be alone ...

These the wise should know as the Pratyekabuddha family."

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S: Perhaps I should say a few words about the Pratyekabuddhas. The Pratyekabuddha is a rather mysterious sort of figure. He appears in Buddhist literature, but Buddhist teachers aren't always very clear or very sure what he actually stands for because the figure, or the ideal of the Pratyekabuddha seems a bit contradictory. Schematically speaking, you've got first of all the Arhant, who gains Enlightenment with a teacher. This teacher of course is the Buddha. But though he has a teacher, he has no disciples of his own.

So that's the Arhant Ideal. Then you've got the Pratyekabuddha. The Pratyekabuddha gains Enlightenment without a teacher. The Arhant had a teacher, the Pratyekabuddha had no teacher. He gains Enlightenment without a teacher and like the Arhant, he has no pupils; he doesn't teach.

The Bodhisattva on the other hand, gains Enlightenment with a teacher in previous lives, though not with a teacher in the life in which he gains Enlightenment. After gaining Enlightenment, he has pupils, he has disciples. This is the usual, the standard schematic explanation. But, this makes the ideal of the Pratyekabuddha quite difficult to understand. It makes even the ideal of the Arhant, if you take it in a literal sort of way, quite difficult to understand. I mean, it's difficult to understand how anybody could gain Enlightenment, - Enlightenment being both Wisdom and Compassion, and not want to teach. To remain without disciples. In the case of the Arhant, he at least passes on the teaching of his teacher, of the Enlightened Buddha, but in the case of the Pratyekabuddha even that doesn't happen. He's just on his own. He's Enlightened but he has no inclination to teach. He has no pupils. It seems almost a contradiction in terms.

So different people have solved this in different ways. For instance, in the verse which Gampopa quotes, he says, "They keep silent about their teachers". He explains it in that way, or the verse explains it in that way. Not that the Pratyekabuddha has no teacher, or teachers, but he keeps silent about his teachers. In some ways that seems to make it worse.

You get the impression that this is a kind of Buddha. No, you don't get the impression now at all. "Shaken by Samsara they run after Nirvana. They have little compassion and are extremely conceited. They keep silent about their teachers and like to be alone. These the wise should know as the Pratyekabuddha family".

It doesn't sound much of an ideal, though, yes, you can imagine some people going through this sort of phase. I was just reminded of the sort of intellectual Buddhist that you used to get in this country. They're rather individualistic. They don't want to have anything to do with other people. They don't like to join Buddhist societies or Buddhist groups. They're very much against groups. Do you see what I mean? And they study [128] and read a lot, but they don't like to admit that they've learned anything from anybody. They like just to keep to themselves. So you do definitely have that sort of person, whether they belong to the Pratyekabuddha family or not, well, that's another matter; but that's their tendency. I mean, it doesn't seem to be a normal, healthy phase of spiritual life really.

Vajrasuri: It sounds like they're protecting themselves in some way.

S: Yes. I mean, there are people like this but it's not really as though they belong to a particular spiritual family in the sense of, you know, having a tendency towards a particular kind of ideal of Enlightenment. It's as though they see Enlightenment in a rather distorted kind of a way.

Voice: If they were Buddhas, how would anyone know they were Buddhas?

S: Well, the Buddha, in the Pali texts, in the Sutras, refers to them and the Buddha presumably knows. All these things and some legends, you know, refer to Pratyekabuddhas. People know that they're Pratyekabuddhas, presumably by their behaviour.

So, Gampopa has described the characteristics of people belonging to the Pratyekabuddha family. That is to say, the sort of people who will eventually on account of their particular characteristics, become Pratyekabuddhas, rather than Sravakas or Bodhisattvas. There's one point of some special interest here, that, as I mentioned, a Pratyekabuddha gains Enlightenment without any teacher. I mean, this is the traditional teaching. So you might say, well, why does that happen? Why does he have no teacher? Well, it's because earlier on in his spiritual career when he simply belonged to the family of, when he belonged to the Pratyekabuddha family, such a person "kept silent about his teachers". The text says "they keep silent about their teachers" and this is why it is suggested that [129] later on, they gain or they have to gain Enlightenment without any teacher. You see what I mean? In other words, if you don't acknowledge your teachers, if you don't value your teachers, you don't get any.

Voice: So, if you don't acknowledge your teachers you don't get any?

S: Yes, well this is what seems to be suggested.

Dhammadinna: You mean, later on, in another life you don't find a teacher again?

S: Yes. You'd be less likely to have teacher, to find a teacher. "They keep silent about their teachers". Well, it can't be any coincidence, that, taking the teaching at, so to speak, its face value, it can't be any coincidence that as a Pratyekabuddha you gain or have to gain Enlightenment without a teacher and the fact that earlier on in your career you kept silent about your teachers. There seems to be a definite connection. But the question which arises is: all right, why does one keep silent about one's teachers?

Vajrasuri: Because of arrogance.

S: Yes. It says, in any case that they are extremely conceited, those who belong to the Pratyekabuddha family. So, one keeps silent about one's teachers out of arrogance.

Dhammadinna: So that it appears that you haven't been taught anything, that you discovered it all for yourself.

S: Yes, yes.

Voice: But who would it be apparent to if you weren't teaching? If you weren't communicating with anybody? I don't quite see ...

S: How would what be apparent?

Same Voice: That you had been taught anything. If you keep quiet about your teachers, who would then be aware that you had actually been taught anything? What would be the point of your being arrogant ...

Dhammadinna: You're not passing it on. They don't teach, so their arrogance is not really going ...

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S: Well, perhaps that is a form of their arrogance, that they don't teach. They don't want to

bother about other people. They don't think other people are worth bothering about. perhaps they think that whatever they ... (End of Tape 5)

S: Well, they won't teach things, the Vedas, to those who are not Brahmins.

Megha: But are they Enlightened?

S: Well, no. But people who belong to the Pratyekabuddha family are not Enlightened. This is the attitude. So, one might say, "well, what is the culmination of that attitude?" Yes? So, the culmination of that is the Pratyekabuddha, who has no teacher and who has no disciples. Now, whether, that is a real spiritual ideal, a real spiritual possibility, that's another matter. But you see the sort of pattern? That someone isn't willing to acknowledge his spiritual debts, as it were. Well, that can only be due to conceit. You know, wanting other people to think that whatever he learned he learned by himself. He found it out by himself. One does find this.

I mean, sometimes, you find people, say, writing books - it might be books on Buddhism and they don't acknowledge their sources. I had some experience of this some years ago - I think I mentioned it before. Where did I mention it, on some tape? You seem familiar with this. Someone cribbed whole pages from the Survey without any acknowledgements, or inverted commas or anything, and from other books. So it's, you know, an illustration of that sort of attitude; not acknowledging your sources, not acknowledging your debts. Wanting other people to think that you've found it all out by yourself. It was your own original thought.

Well, in modern India, it's even much worse than that. I mean, there are plenty of people translating, quite well know European novels into Indian languages for the benefit of Indian people to ... (Laughter obscuring words) ... and sometimes they put their own names to them as their own original work. Well, they change the names to Indian works, you know, I mean, names to Indian proper names, and so on, but otherwise it's a straight translation, or at least a free adaptation. But they don't write translated from, or adapted from so and so. No. They put their own name there as the author. So it's the same sort of thing, but one can go further than that. There's a novel by Dickens called "Hard Times" - has anybody read that? (Voices: Yes) There are some rather strange, not say, slightly unpleasant characters in that "Hard Times". There's Mr Gradgrind, and then there's Mr Bounderbee ... (Voice: and Mr Chokeumahild - laughter) ...that's right. But do you remember the story, the history of Mr Bounderbee? Was it Mr Bounderbee the self-made man? Do you remember? Didn't he declare that [131] he'd had no advantages at all in his early life? That he'd been thrown out by his mother and spent his early days in the gutter, and had raised himself entirely by his own efforts? Did he not make that claim? And was it not shown up eventually to be quite false? And what actually had been the situation? How had he spent his early life?

Voice: He had a mother, didn't he? ... (S: He had a mother, yes.) ... and his mother used to come and see him once a year without him knowing.

S: Yes, but that's later on in the story. But had his mother thrown him out? Had he been raised in the gutter? No. Apparently she'd brought him up very nicely. (Laughter) And he apparently made out that he'd learned to read and write just by spelling out shop signs and he was a poor little boy of 6 or 7 working for his own living. But his mother it transpired, had had him carefully taught and had kept all his little exercise books. (Laughter) So he wasn't by any

means a self-made man. But, you know, this is an example of the same kind of thing, isn't it? You want people to think you've done it all yourself. You've not been helped by anybody; you've done it entirely by your own efforts; nobody has helped you.

And of course, there is the example in Blake of Urizen. He makes this claim that he's done it all himself. That he's self-dependent; that he's indebted to nobody. So this is a sort of human, though not very human, attitude; that is, of keeping silent about your teachers - concealing your debts as a human being, your cultural debts - your spiritual debts even and not being honest about them. So this brings them a false, a pseudo-self sufficiency, a sort of conceit, an arrogance, a pseudo-independence - not wanting others to think that you even learned anything from anybody.

Dhammadinna: Sort of goes against the whole thing of expressing gratitude for ...

S: Yes, there's another aspect too. There's no gratitude. (pause)

Linda: I don't know if it quite follows on the same way, but you get people often very wealthy people, who say they're self-made. Often they come from very poor origins, and they say that they started out from nothing and they made it all themselves and they're now very wealthy and they think - they're quite hard-hearted about it, you know, They won't give it away, they won't help other people because they think - "I started with nothing, and I made all this, so every body else should".

S: Why should it be easy for you, if it was difficult for me?!

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Linda: And also having got all that, you know, they hang on to it. They sort of made it for themselves and keep it to themselves and it seems to follow on with the Pratyekabuddhas, not having any disciples, not giving any teaching.

S: Yes. "I had a hard time, why shouldn't you have a hard time? I had to do it all myself, why shouldn't you?" It's very unsocial and from a Bodhisattva's point of view, very unspiritual. So those who belong to the Pratyekabuddha family keep silent.

Voice: And you could look at that in every day terms. If you don't value your teacher, you're not really receiving teaching.

S: Right, yes. The less you value, the less you receive. One could apply this to spiritual friends, even ordinary friends. If you don't value them, if you don't appreciate them, well, they'll gradually dwindle away and you'll be left without any friends, whether spiritual or otherwise. (Pause)

Voice: Can you see the Pratyekabuddha, not as a real category, but more as a logical necessity? From the times when the Dharma isn't available, that he literally could have no teacher and discover the Dharma ...

S: Ah, but the point is that the Pratyekabuddha doesn't teach. I mean, the Buddha, that is to say, the human, historical Buddha in so far as this life is concerned, he has no teacher, because the Dharma is not known. But he gains Enlightenment and then he teaches. That is

one of the reasons why he is moved to gain Enlightenment. But in the case of the Pratyekabuddha, he is not so moved.

Same Voice: Yes, but what I meant was, that it wasn't actually a real person but because the tendency of life is towards Enlightenment, then, even if the Dharma isn't around, like there's a kalpa with no Buddha, then people will still gain Enlightenment. Maybe they won't teach but it actually is just a logical category.

S: In away it is a logical category, but it's as though whether you gain Enlightenment and then teach, if there was a real possibility, depends upon your aspirations before gaining Enlightenment. Because the Bodhisattva, in the course of his preparation for Enlightenment, equips himself in such a way that after Enlightenment, he is able to teach. He bears that in mind, this is the traditional view. Yes?

Voice: I didn't realize that.

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S: I mean the traditional view has its own difficulties. The inherent difficulty of this particular traditional teaching is that it seems to distinguish three different categories of Enlightenment, due perhaps to certain historical developments. But the distinction cannot really be sustained. Though you could perhaps say that there are these different kinds of people, with these different approaches to Enlightenment, but that there are these different corresponding, as it were, kinds of Enlightenment for different kinds of people, (that) I think cannot be sustained. In fact, Gampopa himself feels a difficulty and solves it himself in his own way a little later on. The Sadharma Pundarika shows the same difficulty and solves it with its teaching of Ekayana which of course, Gampopa refers to.

Dhammadinna: Does the Pratyekabuddha, - he's mentioned by the Buddha in the Pali Canon - it's an early ...

S: It would seem to be, but one mustn't forget you know, that the idea, the word 'Buddha' itself didn't originally have the highly specialized meaning. Originally it meant nothing more than just, 'a wise man'. Not someone who was Enlightened in the later full Buddhistic sense. So, the term 'Pratyekabuddha' usually in this earlier sense, or the word 'Buddha', here in the earlier sense, would simply mean a wise man who just lived by himself and would seem therefore, to have indicated the Rishi. That is to say, the sort of Hindu sage - just living by himself in the forest, but not literally, someone who was Enlightened as a Pratyekabuddha, but you know, later on, when the word 'Buddha' had gained another meaning, well, obviously, 'Pratyekabuddha' changed its meaning and you then sort of had to explain how there could be someone who was, as it were, privately Enlightened in the full Buddhist sense. And it was difficult in those days of course, for people to understand that words could change their meaning.

This whole idea about historical development was just not present then. So they somehow had to explain what a Pratyekabuddha was, not realizing perhaps that it was really nothing more than just a wise man who lived by himself. They had to give some sort of explanation of how there could be a Buddha, a kind of Buddha, who lived by himself. So, it was really, in a way quite an artificial problem.

Dhammadinna: So, it mainly arose initially, because obviously in the cultural conditions of India there were lots of people like that - solitary wanderers.

S: Yes, right. This is what it would seem.

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Dhammadinna: And the Buddha mentioned them or talked about them.

S: Yes, and since he used the word 'Buddha', which then had a very general meaning, in a sense, misled later Buddhists, when the word had assumed a much more specialized meaning. But, nonetheless, the type of person who is here described as belonging to the Pratyekabuddha family, that type of person does exist. But, what one might say is that it isn't really a sort of special kind of Enlightenment, in the Buddhist sense, for which such people are destined, yes?

Anjali: In the scriptures, didn't the Buddha say: "I am the Buddha, fully Enlightened One", so I got the feeling he was revaluing the term.

S: Yes, because he would use the term 'Samyaksambuddha' or 'Sammāsambuddha, I mean, which takes the word 'Buddha' but adds to it, makes it more emphatic, makes it clear that something else is meant. If the word 'Buddha' simply by itself is used in the Pali scriptures, it usually means just a wise man. But when the expression 'Samyaksambuddha' or 'Sammāsambuddha' is used, well, it means someone who is Enlightened in the traditional Buddhist sense. But eventually when that came to be more widely understood, one just dropped the 'Samma' and just spoke of a Buddha, in the later, more developed Buddhistic sense.

Megha: When would that have been? In the later more developed Buddhistic sense? Time-wise?

S: Well, that also you find in the Pali Canon, because the Pali Canon contains material from different periods. I mean, the Buddha also didn't always use the word 'Buddha'. I mean, this is the word, this is the title for the Buddha, as we call him, with which we are most familiar in the West, especially because Buddhism is called 'Buddhism'. But, in the Pali Scriptures we find the Buddha referring to himself, much more frequently by the term 'Tathagata'. He uses the term 'Tathagata' much more frequently than he uses the term 'Sammāsambuddha' or the term 'Buddha'. The term 'Jina' is also used, and people refer to him, usually his followers refer to him simply as 'Bhagavan' not as the 'Buddha' as we would say, but as 'Bhagavan'. He is referred to by those who are not his followers as 'Sakyamuni' - the 'Muni', the sage, the silent sage, from the Sakya tribe.

Incidentally, Pratyekabuddha originally seems to have meant something like 'muni'. A 'muni' also was the wise man, the silent sage, as it's usually translated of the existing tradition. "Muni" means literally [135] - 'one who is silent', but on most occasions someone who is wise - hence, 'silent sage'.

Dhammadinna: Would there have been solitary people like that in Buddhist times - genuinely silent, so that in a sense, they wouldn't have talked about their teacher or talked, because they'd taken a long-term vow of silence?

S: It seems there were people who were, at least, that way inclined.

Voice: There has been recently hasn't there, Bhante?

S: Oh, yes, indeed.

Same Voice: And also going back to the changing of the word when I read of the Mitras' Parinirvana in the Newsletter I was a bit confused. I thought the Buddha was the only person who'd had a Parinirvana. Apparently that just means 'death'.

S: Yes, amongst our Ex-Untouchable Buddhist Friends, they in a way, got hold of the wrong end of the stick. Because they see, in the Buddhist scriptures, that the Buddha's Parinirvana is referred to, they hear you know. Buddhists referring to the Parinirvana of the Buddha. So they think that that just means, that that's a polite way of saying 'death'. So they refer to, well, anybody's Parinirvana. For instance, when I told the story that years ago somebody came to me say "Well, Bhante (Bhante here said in Hindi), my father's had his Parinirvana. Would you please come and perform the funeral ceremony". (Laughter) Because in Indian Languages, you've often got polite expressions, as distinct from ordinary, everyday expressions; honorific expressions as distinct from ordinary expression. So they just think it's an extra polite way of saying that somebody died. But of course, it isn't really that at all.

In the same way, in Japan, the deceased were always referred to as 'Buddhas'. I mean because, during your lifetime you were a Bodhisattva, so when you died, well, what did you become? You became a Buddha. So in Japanese Buddhism, very often, the deceased are referred to, so to speak, politely, as Buddhas, which doctrinally speaking is very wrong indeed.

Voice: I know what I wanted to ask - why the silent muni? You just said earlier that people often, who weren't followers of the Buddha, referred to him as the 'silent'?

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S: 'Mahamuni', well, 'Sakyamuni' - yes. 'Muni' means literally 'one who is silent' and it was the practise, apparently for those who'd taken up the spiritual life in the Buddha's day, to observe silence. The Buddha himself often remained silent. So there came to be a sort of association between silence and spiritual life, spiritual understanding and therefore wisdom. So 'muni' came to mean, not just one who was silent, but someone who was wise, a sage; a wise man. So it was in this sense that the Buddha was called Sakyamuni. You know, it wouldn't be correct to literally translate that as 'the silent one from the Sakya tribe or Sakya clan'. It's the wise man from the Sakya clan or Sakya tribe. But in English, some translators want to give both the literal and the implied meaning, translate 'muni' as 'silent sage'.

But let's get a bit back to this question of not liking to be indebted to anybody. It's rooted in a sort of pseudo-self sufficiency. You can't be self-sufficient in this world. As a human being you can't be completely self-sufficient. It's impossible. There's very little that actually depends upon your own efforts. Certainly in ordinary social life. I mean, the very house that you live in, did you build it? Somebody else built it. The very food that you eat, did you grow it? Did you even cook it? Did you even serve it? The books that you read, you didn't write them; you didn't print them ; you didn't bind them. Other people have done these things for you. You're indebted to the society. I mean, Buddhism itself, did you discover it? No. It's come to you as a sort of free gift. So what you contribute is very very little. So one should be conscious of this

and be duly grateful; duly thankful.

I mean, had it not been for your parents would you have survived? Of course not. Certainly one owes a debt of gratitude to your parents as well. This is in the East, felt very strongly.

Dhammadinna: This comes up later when we study the chapter on Metta - that one of the bases for Metta was knowing the benefits you'd received.

S: Yes, right.

Dhammadinna: And then a discussion ensued and that actually gratitude is a basis for the development of Metta.

S: Yes, right. Because that's the natural tendency that you should feel Metta towards those who have benefited you - unless your nature has been altogether warped.

Dhammadinna: So, it seems to be an attitude of gratitude and then to share what you, [137] - and the other end is to share whatever you have received.

S: Yes, right. Well, that is, in a way, a form of gratitude. You've received from others, and you feel grateful, and you therefore also feel like sharing with others, you feel like passing on.

Anjali: Do you think there's an attitude today, Bhante, that to feel gratitude in that way is a bit unrealistic? The world's so horrible and nasty that, well, I heard somebody say, in a study group a little while ago, that to feel gratitude in that way was a bit 'Pollyanna'.

S: What's 'Pollyanna'?

Linda: She was a little girl in a book who, whenever something really horrible happened to her, she could always think of something positive, that you could be glad about.

S: She sounds like a very nice little girl. (Laughter)

Linda: Oh, that's right, she wanted a doll for Christmas and she was dependent on Red Cross parcels, or something like that, so she got a pair of crutches instead of her doll. So, it was called 'the being glad game', and she was glad she didn't need the crutches ...

S: VERY positive! (Laughter)

Linda: She would go around telling other people what they needed to be glad about.

Voice: That must have been unbearable. (Laughter)

S: No doubt there are certain things in life that one doesn't feel grateful for at all; in fact shouldn't feel grateful for, but on the other hand there is really quite a lot that one should feel grateful for, especially if one is in contact with the Dharma. I mean, surely that should outweigh a lot of other things.

Rosie Ong: Because one meets a lot of angry resentful young people, because they don't feel

gratitude for what they've got.

Voice: Well, half the time you're not aware of what you have got.

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S: Yes. Well, they as we say, take it for granted. They think all these things grow on trees, as it were. That they haven't actually been produced by people working for them in society. They think the world owes them a living, owes them all sorts of things.

Voice: Why does it happen that as soon as people do have enough, generally societies do have enough, they seem to stop feeling grateful, you know. I think it does seem to be the case, the more that's laid on ...

S: It's as though they cease to see the cause-effect relationship. If something has always been provided, well, you think it's just there. It's part of the nature of things that it should be just there. And if at any time, for any reason it ceases to be there, well, you feel as if a great injustice has been done to you, instead of being grateful that you had those things before. Some people for instance, they don't feel grateful that they have a motor bike, they feel angry and resentful that they haven't got a motor car. (Laughter) It seems rather sad, doesn't it? But gratitude certainly is one of the Buddhist virtues. It is to be cultivated, a feeling of gratitude.

Paula: I used to get quite angry if my mother used to say, "well, you should eat all your dinner up, - there's some poor people who haven't got even any dinner. And I used to think she was making me feel guilty, and that she was nagging. I do find myself doing the same thing. (Laughter)

S: I think also a lot depends on the way you say this. You can say it in a punishing - almost negative sort of way, a cross, scolding sort of way, rather than you're trying to make the children, sort of force them to eat, because you think that's what they ought to do, rather than really trying to develop their positive emotions, so that they really do feel for other less fortunate people in other countries.

But I suppose, chances are, if the pattern was imposed on you, by your mother, if you're not careful, as a mother, you'll impose it on your children. I think that this is one of the things we have to watch. You don't do to others, in a negative sense, what has been done to you in similar circumstances. So, mothers, beware, if there are any present. Oh, yes, there are several here. (Pause.) I remember asking Sulocana once whether she thought she'd made any mistakes in bringing up her children. So she thought a bit and she said: "It's inevitable". (Laughter)

Anyway, let's go on and see what Gampopa has to say about these two families. He has something of his own to say here. Would someone like to read it right from "These two families", the whole of that paragraph:

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Vajrapushpa: "These two families of Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas represent two distinct ways of life, and although both of them attain their respective goals, the Nirvana which the claim to have experienced is not the real one. In what state then do they abide? Though they stand on ground prepared by the habitual working of ignorance, they remain in an essentially mental body acquired through unsullied deeds. Since at this stage meditative absorption is

unsullied they cling to the idea that this is Nirvana. You may now argue, if this Nirvana is not the real one, the Exalted One should not have shown these two ways. Oh yes! He should have done so for the following reason. Suppose some Indian merchants go to fetch jewels from the outer sea, but in the middle of their journey in some desert, they become exhausted and think that they cannot go on. Then as they are about to turn back, their leader by his miraculous power creates a huge city for their refuge. In the same way those of little courage take fright after hearing of the Buddha's spiritual awareness, thinking that it will be most troublesome to attain to Buddhahood, and that through their inability they will have to turn back. Then they find that they can stay where they are as Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas now that these two ways of life have been shown to them. As is stated in the Saddharmapundarika Sutra: Thus all Sravakas think that they have attained Nirvana. To them the Victorious One says that this is rest but not Nirvana."

S: So you see how Gampopa, following the teaching of the Saddharmapundarika Sutra solves the problem. In earlier Buddhist literature, though not in the earliest, these three ideals, are presented as three distinct in a sense, equally valid ideals. There's the ideal of the Arhant, the Pratyekabuddha and the Samyaksambuddha and you can chose either of these. You can become an Arhant, and of course remain an Arhant. You can become a Pratyekabuddha and remain a Pratyekabuddha, become a Samyaksambuddha, remain a Samyaksambuddha. There are these three separate distinct Yanas. But if one looks at the matter in this way, as many Buddhists did, for historical reasons, then obviously there are various difficulties as we have seen.

So Gampopa solves the problem by maintaining that Arhantship and Pratyekabuddhaship are not really ultimate goals at all, are not real alternative goals. They are just, as it were, intermediate positions on the way to Samyaksambuddhahood. That the Arhant and the Pratyekabuddha have not in fact gained Enlightenment. They've come to rest, in an inferior kind of Nirvana which is not really Nirvana at all. And the Buddha has, as it were, allowed them to rest there for the time being. Of course, Gampopa, like other traditional Buddhists has to accept, has to take the scriptures literally, he has to accept that, yes, the Buddha did teach the goal of Arhantship. Yes, he did teach the goal of Pratyekabuddhahood, but did he do that? Well, just to give people of that type, the opportunity to rest for a while, before continuing their journey to Samyaksambuddhahood and that is, of course, the teaching of the Saddharmapundarika Sutra - the White Lotus Sutra.

There's therefore, only one path, only one Yana, Ekayana, the path of the Bodhisattva. But everybody may not be able to accept that, so the Buddha as it were, allows them to think that there is an alternative goal, or that there are alternative goals, in the form of Arhantship and Pratyekabuddhaship. [140] But these are not in fact, alternative goals, these are really only stages on the path on the one path to Samyaksambuddhahood. It's all a bit cumbersome, a bit round about, but that is because, as I said earlier, because ancient Indian Buddhists did not have any historical sense, did not have any sense of historical development. But they came, in the end to the right conclusion, even though by rather a round about way. I mean, this is the conclusion to which we come - that, yes, there is one goal, there is Enlightenment, in a manner of speaking and you can approach that, you know, from various points of departure. You can look at that in various ways, but in the end all your different ways converge. There's really only one path. Only one course of the Higher Evolution.

Rosie: Buddha's followers were quite shaken - weren't they, in the White Lotus Sutra when he

...

S: Yes, according to the White Lotus Sutra, he referred to Arhants who thought that they had really gained Enlightenment, that they had nothing further to do, were really quite shaken when they were told that they had something further to do, and one can apply this principle all the way along the path. You know, people tend to settle down quite easily, perhaps quite prematurely, not only individually but even collectively.

I have been talking a little bit about this recently in connection with being happy, healthy and human. Do you know what I mean? I mean quite a lot of people who come along to our centres say, to begin with are not very happy. Maybe not even very healthy, perhaps not even particularly human. But after coming along for a while, after becoming involved with Centre activities and the other people around the Centre, they start sorting themselves out with the help of Meditation, Kalyana Mitrata, retreats, communications, study and so on, they start sorting themselves out and they actually start becoming happy. They also, perhaps, start becoming healthy and feeling more human. So, you know, after a year or two, they may be in a quite positive state. But then what happens is they want to rest in that positive state, rather to enjoy that positive state. They perhaps don't think very much any more about further, higher spiritual development. It's such a new thing to them, and this in a way is rather sad because it's quite a reflection on our existing society. It's quite a new thing for them to be happy, healthy and human and just to be able to enjoy life, even just to enjoy ordinary human life. Maybe formerly they weren't able to enjoy it. Well, it's good that they're able to enjoy it, but they get a bit immersed in this if they're not careful, and forget about the higher, further spiritual perspectives. If they've got everything, sort of, going for them on the ordinary happy, healthy and human level.

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So this represents also a sort of settling down in what is really no more than a stage on the way. I mean, in effect, you've come to regard that stage as the goal. Of course, you know that it isn't, intellectually. If anyone asks you, well, you know perfectly well that you haven't reached Nirvana or full Enlightenment. But, you know, that's just intellectual; that's just theoretical. You only theoretically accept, that there is something further. In effect you've settled down on that particular level of being. Do you know what I am talking about? Do you recognize the picture, as it were?

A Voice: In a way, though when you do start settling down, that's when something uncomfortable usually starts happening.

S: Sometimes, but it may not happen for quite a while. (Pause)

Voice: Are you saying that people who follow the Arhant path nowadays are aware that it's not the final path?

S: Well, in Theravada countries on the whole, people do consciously follow the Arhant Path to the extent that they do follow a path at all. They don't think of the path of the Bodhisattva as more beneficial path as the Mahayana does. That is one of the differences. They think that Buddhas are very rare beings, and that only one among millions aspires to become a Buddha. That it's much too difficult, they think for the majority. The majority just aspire to become Arhants under the guidance or leadership of the Buddha.

So from the Mahayana point of view, all right, never mind, let them gain Arhantship and then perhaps, little by little, their eyes will be opened, and then they will decide or they'll see that there is something further to be attained and try to attain it.

Rosie Ong: Will they actually get Enlightened?

S: Well, if they make the effort. One can't say that they will or that they won't. It's provisional, it's hypothetical - if they make the effort.

Rosie Ong: But then if Enlightenment is as you said, wisdom and compassion ...

S: Well, they gain Enlightenment even as an Arhant. In the sense of real Enlightenment, no, I mean, in a way it's a question of words, a question of terms. No, from the Mahayana point of view they're not really Enlightened. It's a pseudo-Enlightenment, a pseudo-Nirvana as Gampopa makes clear. But that, of course, is not the Hinayana view or the Theravada, because they believe there is a real Enlightenment as an Arhant. The Mahayana would not agree with that.

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Vajrasuri: Do you think that it's a trap that we can fall into in our own movement, that we have such a supportive, positive quality that we can kind of rest within the positive, happy, healthy, human position and find that so interesting and fascinating that we don't push on?

S: Well, yes, this is very definitely the danger and it's one of the reasons why I've been talking about it of late, to quite a number of people, especially down in London. I think, you know, it becomes more of a danger, this sort of thing when there's a comparatively large number of people around a comparatively big Centre, a lot happening and maybe a lot of peripheral activities, a big positive group. Well, it's good to have a big positive group but it isn't good to settle down in it and identify oneself with it completely. You know, forgetting the more purely spiritual dimension of things, forgetting that, you know, there are further possibilities of growth and development.

Paula: I used to feel, a couple of years ago, quite resentful that I could not be actually living in a community, because of having children, but I realize now that had I moved straight into a community, straight from family life, marriage life, into a community, I'd have projected that sort of dependence on the community.

S: Well, I think that it is important that when one does join one, when one does move into a community, that one does that from a position of strength. That you're not looking for a family, that you never had, or a family life that you never had. You're not looking for support that you're unable to give yourself. If you do move into a community it should be as a strong person, who is capable of standing on his or her own feet, who's not looking for a bit of backbone, you know, by joining a community, who already has a backbone but who is, as an individual wanting to have further contact with other individuals and enter upon an entirely new dimension of things, above and beyond even the positive group. I mean, certainly within a community, even a spiritual community there is a level on which, yes, it's a positive group. It's difficult you know, to remain on the level of being a spiritual community literally all the time. Yes, so there is a positive group level, but there must also be that other level of spiritual community in the strict sense.

But if you need a group, you can't really be a member of spiritual community. If you're just sort of looking for a happy, family type situation, in the spiritual community, well, it won't be really a spiritual community, at least not so far as you're concerned, or to the extent that you are a member of it. So it's the independent person, who is able to live on his or her own and able to make a success of his or her own life by himself, or by [143] herself, who should then think in terms of joining a spiritual community, so as to carry the process of development a stage further and not the person who finds the world outside too cold or bleak or difficult or uncertain or unkind or unfriendly so they scuttle off to a supposedly spiritual community for warmth and shelter and protection. That's not the right sort of motivation.

Rosie Ong: One has had to have some sort of security like, before, I suppose in the process of becoming happy, healthy and human, you've had to have some sort of secure family life.

S: Hmm, yes. I think that a child needs security. I think that if you didn't have that as a child you can still be looking for it even as an adult, which means that to that extent you're not really an adult, you haven't really grown up. You're still looking for the security of the home.

Rosie O: Does that mean that you have to go and find that security and experience it, before you can be happy?

S: I think you have to come to terms with the fact that you didn't have that security. I think that if you didn't have it as a child, I don't think you can recreate that situation. I think that you have to accept that you missed that as a child and you have to do your best to develop as an individual now, on your own, accepting that you didn't have that support when you were a child. But I don't think, as an adult, you can go around looking for the situation that you should have had as a child, because you're not a child now, even though you haven't fully grown up, but you're not a child either.

Rosie O: But one can find it say, in a marriage or something like that.

S: Well (Laughter), maybe those who have been married would like to offer their opinion. But you can certainly look for security and maybe some people do look in marriage for the kind of security that they didn't have as children. I think that if they do that, my guess is that they put the marriage itself under quite a serious strain, because they're expecting from their ... (End of Side A) as a spectator of the game (Laughter), rather than a participant. But even a spectator sees quite a lot of the match (Laughter). But one could say, from this point of view, marriage is for the mature, not for the immature. (Pause)

Kay: And thinking of joining a community when you have children, I think it's very important to consider the children as human beings and being very sure of what they want, who they want to live with. Other children that they want to live with, or don't want to live with, because they're [144] not necessarily going to get on are they with other friends?

S: Well, even the adults are not necessarily going to get on. Well, I think, if anything, there's even less problem with the children getting on, though again I speak with caution. (Pause)

But one shouldn't use the spiritual community or try to use the spiritual community as a substitute for the positive group. You know, so therefore, if one does decide to move into a spiritual community, you should move in from a position of strength, not from weakness.

That's why I find it not a bad thing that some of our friends have this idea to live on their own for a bit, just by themselves.

I suppose there are those who've never lived by themselves. It's good to have that sort of experience of life and to know that you, you can get on by yourself, you can live on your own; be perfectly happy and cheerful. You can look after yourself, organize your own life without mother, without husband, without wife, without friends. It's quite nice to know that, that you can do it. (Pause)

Vajrasuri: And anyway, it's only when you actually experience yourself living by yourself, that you meet aspects of yourself that you just never had an opportunity of meeting and they're quite surprising, some good, some bad. But whole great chunks of yourself.

S: Yes, you can be all your own personal demons, all your own personal angels. (Pause) Anyway, we got on to that from talking about the Arhant and the Pratyekabuddha coming to rest in a, well, what is really a provisional Nirvana. It looks like Nirvana, it look like the final goal but it isn't really and you know, people can come to rest in that sort of way, thinking that a stage is the final goal, so to speak, you know, on all sorts of other levels. (Pause)

One of the advantages of living alone is that, you know, you don't, or you can't so easily make demands upon other people. I think sometimes we aren't aware of the extent to which we make demands upon other people, how demanding we are. You know, sometimes even like how much we bother other people with our demands. So it's quite salutary, I think, to spend some time on one's own, to live alone, to meet your own demands.

Vajrasuri: To meet your own demands is a worthy action. I'll think about that.

S: But no doubt there are certain things which you do need to get from other people, which you can't you know, supply yourself. Well, there's [145] Kalyana Mitrata, for instance. But you're not justified, so to speak, in asking others to give you what you, as a mature adult person ought to have been able to give or to provide yourself with. Do you see what I mean? You're perfectly justified, so to speak, in asking another person to give you if he or she wishes or can give you, what you can't give yourself. But you're not justified in asking people to do for you what you should be doing for yourself.

Vajrasuri: And that happens if you're living with people, but if you're living on your own, you really do have to learn how to ask for what you can't provide for yourself, ask in such a way as to have a salutary experience. For one thing, you never realized before that's what you needed, because you got into a funny kind of habit of demanding it, of course not getting it, (Laughter) but then ...

Paula: It doesn't work like that, does it? You demand it but you don't actually get it anyway.

Vajrapushpa: You should never expect to get anything, even if you ask. Not to get anything.

Vajrasuri: So many responses go on, on subtle levels that you're not aware of 'till you're actually living by yourself. (Pause)

S: Well, perhaps you are always aware, while you're living with other people, the extent to

which other people tend to fill all the space around you. It's only when you get on your own you realize well, good heavens, that kind of strange feeling that I'm having now, the strange experience is of empty space all around me, literally and psychologically, and then you start thinking how pleasant it is, you know, how positive. There's no one impinging on you. You've actually got a lot of elbow room.

Vajrasuri: And then the days come when you just hate that large space and you try and jam it full, like with music or books or ...

S: But it should not be an attempt to fill the space, but to grow out from it, you know, into new situation, creatively - not reactively. You move out you know, from being on your own, because you feel ready for a further development, an expansion, not because you're tired or terrified even, of being on your own. (Pause) Anyway, I think that this is all ground that has been covered many a time within the Friends, and is something with which most people are quite familiar. Let's go on and see further what Gampopa has to say on the subject:

[146]

Rosie Ong: "As soon as the Tathagata learns that they are resting among the Sravakas and the Pratyekabuddhas, He urges them to attain Buddhahood by Body, Speech and Mind. 'By Mind' means that the radiance that emanates from Him awakens beings from their unsullied meditative absorption as soon as it touches the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas in their mental bodies. Thereafter he reveals His Body. 'By Speech' means that He says: 'Bhiksus, you have not yet accomplished your work, you are not doers of your task, your Nirvana is not the real one. Bhiksus, now come to the Tathagata, listen to and understand what He has to say. Thus He urges them on. This has been shown in the Saddharmapundarika Sutra:

Bhiksus, today I declare:

Nirvana has not yet been attained.

For the True spiritual awareness of the Omniscient One

You should rouse your energy and have great confidence.

Attain the True spiritual awareness of the Omniscient One!"

S: So, if anyone is resting among the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, if they are resting in a provisional Nirvana, so to speak, well, who is it that's able to arouse them 'from their unsullied meditative absorption as soon as it touches the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, in their mental bodies'?

Perhaps one shouldn't take this expression, 'mental body', too literally. What appears to be suggested is telepathic communication almost. Perhaps the Arhants, or Pratyekabuddhas wouldn't want to listen to the Buddha. Perhaps they feel they've nothing further to know. They've nothing to gain from any contact with Him, and they're absorbed, perhaps, in quite high states of consciousness, of meditative absorption. Perhaps they're not even conscious of anything through their senses, but that doesn't defeat, as it were, the Buddha. He sets up with them a direct sort of spiritual contact.

He, sort of, touches them in or on their spiritual bodies. They become aware of His presence in that sort of way. So, even though they may be out of physical contact with Him, out of verbal contact initially, he sets up this subtle spiritual contact, which leads to verbal contact, which leads to bodily contact, and you know, He urges them on; tries to make them

understand they haven't reached the goal, not the final goal. It's only provisional, there's something more to do.

Vajrasuri: Talking about an external force? External contact, to help them?

S: Yes. Just like a Kalyana Mitra may arouse someone immersed in the positive group. It's external. But in the case of the Arhant and the Pratyekabuddha it's external in relation to the spiritual body - not the physical body. I mean, within the positive group, [a] Kalyana Mitra may just go up to [147] someone and tap them on the shoulder and say, "Well, come on, you know, it's time you got [on] with things! Time you did some more meditation, time you became more inspired by the ideals."

I mean, how the Buddha would effect this contact with the Arhant or the Pratyekabuddha in the spiritual body, well, maybe we don't really need to inquire. It's a rather mysterious sort of business, but according to the text, this is what happens, this is what's possible. This is what the Buddha is able to do. He might do it perhaps through dreams. Who knows.

A Voice: So even if these people weren't particularly open, He could still contact them?

S: Yes. They wouldn't be open, because, in a way, they weren't expecting to be open, they weren't aware that there was anything for them to be open to, or open about. But, nonetheless, they are represented as being in this high state of meditative absorption, which is a very pure state, a very refined state so they are, in a sense, open to whatever spiritual influences happen to be around, or happen to impinge on them. So, the Buddha is able to establish, as soon as He comes to realize the situation - is able to establish some contact with them, in a very, very, subtle sort of way, and perhaps also this gives a hint to us that if you as a Kalyana Mitra do see someone too deeply absorbed, even in the positive group, perhaps a subtle approach is called for. You know, not the rude sort of policeman-like tap on the shoulder. (Laughter) Not just marching someone off under armed escort as it were. to the meditation room. It's not really to be done like that. What's the best way of doing it, do you think?

A Voice: Humour?

S: Yes, if they've a sense of humour.

Voice: Friendship?

S: Yes. I would have thought friendship. You just make friends with them, that would seem the simplest and most effective way. Just make friends with them. Don't you know, say anything about what they're doing or what they're not doing or what they should be doing, shouldn't be doing. Don't read them a lecture, just make friends with them and if you've made friends with them and if there is some real spiritual interest on your part, well, something of that must rub off on to them. It must stimulate their latent spiritual interests. So, friendship is, I think, the best way of doing it, but friendship without any ulterior motive, in a way, there's a Catch 22. (Laughter) Yes? You mustn't make friends with them deliberately so that [148] you can 'help' them, with a capital H. (Laughter) No, you must also want to make friends with them for their own sake, otherwise it doesn't work, it doesn't feel right.

Linda: I suppose it comes back to working on your own positive states, on your Metta so that

you can help, so you have to work on yourself so ...

S: Yes. You don't sort of work on yourself in order to be able to help others in any artificial sort of way. I mean, we have to express it like that but, in a way, expressing it like that, slightly distorts, well, the whole business. You don't really separate the two. You're being yourself. You're helping yourself and of course, you're helping others, but you're not really thinking too deliberately in those terms. It's just a question of your positivity naturally rubbing off on other people. If you're not unaware of this, but you're not doing it over deliberately. You're not making a great point of it. You're not saying "Well, here I come with my positivity"! (Laughter) Well, some people are a bit like that, you know - they rather hit you with their positivity. Well, it's a bit pseudo. You know, sometimes if they were not so positive, it seems a bit bumptious, a bit, sort of heavy-footed, not to say heavy-handed.

A Voice: You've also got to be aware of the other person. I mean, if you feel like you're hitting somebody with your positivity, then you can go back a bit.

S: Yes, yes. Sensitivity is called for. (Pause) There's in the Saddharmapundarika Sutra, according that quotation, The Buddha says, " Bhikkhus, today I declare Nirvana has not yet been attained". This makes the position very clear. "For the true spiritual awareness of the Omniscient One, you should arouse your energy and have great confidence".

The two things you need. 'You' being the Arhant and the Pratyekabuddha. You should rouse your energy because you've something more to achieve and have great confidence, have confidence in what I say, that there is really something more for you to achieve. "Attain the True spiritual awareness of the Omniscient One." Go a stage further, go a step further. Don't give up, don't settle down. All right would someone like to read the next paragraph and quotation and then we're finished with the Sravakas and the Pratyekabuddhas.

Greta: "Urged on in this way, Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas prepare their minds for an attitude which is directed towards and centred in Enlightenment, and after having practised the Bodhisattva-life throughout countless aeons they become Buddhas. This is stated in the Saddharmapundarika Sutra:

[149]

Sravakas do not pass into Nirvana.

They will all become Buddhas

After having practised the Bodhisattva-life.

S: Hmm, yes. So in this case the Sravakas and the Pratyekabuddhas, you know, they respond. They develop that greater energy, that greater faith. They see that there is something more, something further for them to achieve. So they, so to speak, switch over to the Bodhisattva path. They see that their path converges with that.

So, 'Sravakas do not pass into Nirvana'. They don't remain finally in their provisional Nirvana, they all become Buddhas, having practised the Bodhisattva ideal, having accepted the (break in tape)

Dhammadinna: You'll have to say that again, Bhante.

S: Having accepted the higher ideal of Supreme Enlightenment, having accepted the further and higher ideal of Supreme Enlightenment for the benefit of all, as distinct from the more individual, or the more individualistic goal of the Sravaka or Pratyekabuddha.

(End of Tape)

[149]

S: ... six. We've gone all through the family of the followers of the Mahayana way of life. This family is dealt with in greater detail as one might have expected. Someone like to read it then?

Annie Murphy: "What then, is the 'family of the followers of the Mahayana way of life'?
Classification, essence, synonyms,
Reason for the superiority over other families,
Causal characteristic and distinctive marks - these six topics
Refer to the followers of the Mahayana way of life.

'Classification' here is twofold: the Self-existing and the Evolved family.

As to their respective 'essence', the Self-existing family has the power of setting up the Buddhadharmas, is of beginningless time, and has been obtained by the very nature of all that is. The Evolved family has the same power, but as a result of practising in the past the tenets of the good and wholesome. Consequently both are endowed with the good fortune of Buddhahood."

S: Hmm. Now what do you think this means? (Pause) The family of the followers of the Mahayana way of life is divided into, so to speak, two sub-families, it seems; the Self-existing family and the Evolved family. (Pause) Guenther's notes gives us the Sanskrit terms - 37 and 38. 'Prakrthistha', which means 'established by Nature' and 'Samudanita' which means, as it were, 'relying on a cause'. So what do you make of this?

Dhammadinna: (The arising of the) Bodhicitta is to practise universally?

S: Mmm. There does seem to be a sort of correspondence with, as you've said, the Bodhicitta taken, so to speak, as a discipline, and the Bodhicitta as actually arising and actually experienced. There does seem to be a correspondence with that. Are you familiar with that distinction? You know that in the case of the Going for Refuge, I've distinguished four different kinds of Going for Refuge. Are you familiar with that? What I've called Provisional Going for Refuge, then Effective Going for Refuge; Real Going for Refuge and Absolute Going for Refuge.

Provisional Going for Refuge is as when somebody simply recites or repeats the words of the Going for Refuge formula and probably because they've been, you know, born and brought up in a Buddhist environment, they don't think very seriously about Going for Refuge. Reciting the Going for Refuge formula is just part of their cultural tradition. This I call Provisional Going for Refuge. [151] It's the kind of refuge that is, you know, common in most Buddhist countries.

Then Effective Going for Refuge is what I call that Going for Refuge when you do sincerely

and genuinely, as an individual, Go for Refuge as a matter of your own individual choice, though, and which represents your own definite effort to develop as an individual, to make progress in the direction of Enlightenment, but without your actually having any transcendental Insight. Do you see what I mean? So that you can fall back from that Going for Refuge. That Going for Refuge can be overpowered by adverse factors. So this is the Going for Refuge of someone who is, as we say, ordained as an Upasaka or an Upasika.

And then the Real Going for Refuge corresponds to Stream Entry. Then you really do Go for Refuge, because there is Insight and you can't fall back after that.

And the Absolute Going for Refuge, of course, is when you've gained Enlightenment and don't Go for Refuge, so to speak, to anybody except yourself.

So there's something corresponding to that in the case of the Bodhicitta. One could say there's a Provisional Arising of the Bodhicitta, as when you are - corresponding to the Provisional Going for Refuge - as when you're born into, say, a specifically Mahayana Buddhist environment and maybe you recite the Bodhisattva vows as part of your daily Puja, but it doesn't really mean anything to you. It's just part of your cultural tradition. This is the case with many people, say in Tibet. Everybody takes the Bodhisattva vow, everybody in Tibet is a Mahayana Buddhist technically speaking. So this is, you may say, a Provisional Arising of the Bodhicitta.

And then there is, one might say, the Effective Arising of the Bodhicitta corresponding to the Effective Going for Refuge. When you take the Bodhisattva Ideal really seriously, when you really are trying to gain Enlightenment for the benefit of others, perhaps you even repeat the vow, perhaps you take the Bodhisattva ordination, but you don't actually have any transcendental Insight. You haven't experienced the Bodhicitta as an actual spiritual experience. It's still very much an ideal which you strive after but which as yet you have only a conceptual understanding of. Yes, you've got a certain amount of feeling, but you can fall away from it. Do you see what I mean? It hasn't yet really become a transcendental experience.

And then the Real Arising of the Bodhicitta as is of course [152] when the Bodhicitta itself, really, literally, truly does arise and you actually become a Bodhisattva instead of simply trying to be like a Bodhisattva.

And the Absolute Bodhicitta is, of course, equivalent to Buddhahood itself. So, do you see the distinction?

So one could therefore say that those who belong to the Evolved family are those whose arising of the Bodhicitta is simply the arising of the Effective Bodhicitta. Whereas those who belong to the Self-existing family are those whose arising of the Bodhicitta is a Real Arising. One could say that, one could say as Dhammadinna did, that there is a sort of correspondence here. Or, putting it more broadly, one could say, - I'm not saying this is the only explanation or even the real explanation, one could say that those who belong to the Evolved family are those who are still on the Bodhisattva path as a path of Bodhisattva discipline, who are not yet really Bodhisattvas; who are trying to be Bodhisattvas. But the Self-existing family are those who are on the transcendental Bodhisattva path.

I think actually one can go further than that. I don't know how far one should try to go though. Perhaps it's enough to leave it more or less there and say that the Self-existing family is the family of, one may say, transcendental Bodhisattvas. The Evolved family is the family of Bodhisattvas here on Earth. Do you see what I mean?

Voice: (unclear) timelessness, isn't it?

S: Yes, yes. But then to the extent that one has got on to the transcendental path, one has gone beyond time. So when you're on that path, it's as though you always have been on that path. One could look at it like that. (Long Pause)

All right, let's go on then. That next short paragraph:

Rosie Ong: "The 'synonyms' of the term 'family' are seed, sphere and ultimate nature."

S: We talked about seed yesterday didn't we? One can speak in terms of 'family'. One can also speak in terms of 'seed' - that is to say people of the same basic spiritual disposition, so to speak, can be referred to as belonging to the same spiritual family or as having the same kind of 'seeds', as it were, implanted in them. And also as belonging to the same 'sphere', if you like, [153] being on the same plane, on the same level, on the same wavelength. There are all these alternative expressions.

And 'ultimate nature' - well, I don't know how literally you should take this word 'ultimate'. Depends how ultimate you regard the distinction into 'families' itself. But they've something in common, they've something in common as regards their approach to the spiritual life. It can be expressed either in terms of their belonging to the same spiritual family, having the same kind of spiritual seeds, or potentials, or operating within the same sphere, or on the same wavelength or just having the same nature. That's expressing it more abstractly. These are all synonymous expressions for belonging to the same spiritual family.

In the Vajrayana, the idea of spiritual family, or Kula, becomes quite important - though it's got a rather different basis. There of course, there are five Buddha families, as you probably know; each Buddha has his attendant Bodhisattvas and they have their attendants, and in that way a whole sort of family is built up, and those who follow the Vajrayana are said to have an affinity with this or with that family particularly - either the family of Amitabha or the family of Vairocana and so on. That's another development of the same idea. It's as though one thinks first of all in terms of the spiritual community, the Sangha itself. Then, within that, there are, as it were, sub-communities, and it's these which are called 'Kulas'. It's these which are called spiritual families. When you all belong to the spiritual community, in as much as, you're all thinking in terms of individual development, thinking in terms of Enlightenment. But there are a number of different approaches possible. Perhaps a fixed or limited number of approaches. So that different people, in as much as they adopt a similar approach, fall naturally into different spiritual families and perhaps it is helpful for such people to work more together. Do you see what I mean? Yes?

Debbie: Could you give an example of certain people falling into a particular type of family or approach?

S: Well, one can give an example in terms of the present discussion - that is to say Gampopa's

discussion. Gampopa's division into five spiritual families. For instance, if you felt that you yourself belonged to the Mahayana family; supposing the [154] Bodhisattva Ideal meant a very great deal to you; supposing you were thinking very strongly in terms of gaining Enlightenment for the benefit of all; supposing you really did want to help people. Perhaps you wouldn't want to live and study and practise with people who were, at that time at least, wholly intent just on liberating themselves. You wouldn't find that very encouraging. You might find it very discouraging, if you were constantly associating with people who had no thought of other people, who never thought, who didn't think in terms of ever doing anything for other people. Who were just intent on their own deliverance, their own Enlightenment. Do you see what I mean? I mean that's putting it rather extremely. And this is why it's in fact said in some Mahayana Sutras, that those who follow the Mahayana should not live on very intimate terms with those who follow the Hinayana path. Not that the Hinayana path is necessarily being condemned, but that it will weaken your own resolve to follow the Bodhisattva Path, if you associate with those who themselves are not following that path. Do you see what I mean?

In the case of the Vajrayana, supposing, you're doing for instance, the visualization and mantra recitation of say, Manjusri. You might find it helpful and inspiring to live and study and practise with a number of other people who are doing that same practice. You can help one another, you can discuss your practice together. If you're living with people who are doing another practice, well yes, you can inspire one another in a general way, but when it comes down to discussing perhaps details of practise, details of approach, well then, you've no one to talk to. Or to put it maybe in a slightly different sort of way, supposing you're doing, say, the meditation of Vajrapani - you're thinking very much in terms of energy and vigour and courage, and somebody else is doing the meditation of Tara and is trying to cultivate gentleness and kindness and delicacy and sensitivity. You might get on each others nerves a bit. (Laughter) If you were very deeply into your practice, well, then that probably wouldn't happen. But if you're both in the early stages and one was inspired by the idea of vigour and power and energy and the other was inspired by the idea of tenderness and delicacy and sensitivity, well, it might not be the best thing for you to live and work and practise together. It's just as a sort of expedient. Yes, you're all basically on the same path, and you're all going to get there in the end. You're all going to arrive at the same goal in a sense. But at least at certain stages, it does help to have a closer association with [155] those who belong, so to speak, to your spiritual family. Do you see what I mean?

I don't think, perhaps especially in the West, where there aren't so very many Buddhists belonging to any family anyway, I don't think we can insist on this too rigidly, but it is just useful perhaps to bear in mind, and perhaps if there is a question of your living together with other people in a relatively intimate community, which seems to be the sort of community that is favoured nowadays, (Laughter), it would perhaps be wise to make sure that you have much the same spiritual approach. Do you see what I mean? Because you can help one another more then. Don't for instance, go and live in a spiritual community, especially if there are only four or five of you, if you're very keen on meditation and perhaps somebody else in the community finds it very difficult. Or if you're very keen on study and perhaps somebody else in the community's barely literate. (Laughter)

Or if, say, you're very much into the Arts and poetry means very much to you, and poetry has a place in your spiritual life, well it wouldn't perhaps be very helpful to live in the same community with somebody who couldn't, - I was going to say 'somebody who couldn't even

bear the name of Shelley', but perhaps who hadn't even heard of Shelley. You'd be shocked and horrified every day at breakfast as you discovered the depths of their ignorance. You might reply to a question of theirs with a little neat quotation from D.H. Lawrence, and they wouldn't know what you're talking about. (Laughter)

Megha: Bhante, are you doing something similar when you're giving people similar Order names like the 'Yashas' and the 'Kulas'?

S: That's a bit different because they often have different practices. No, when we're in Tuscany I took study the latter part of the course, just for very small groups of people. We started off with bigger groups and then we divided into smaller groups and these who were in the very small group with me tended to get to know one another very well. I tended to give them similar names. It was simply that.

Dhammadinna: Would you think it works with really basic practice when you suggested people in the cafe - the Cherry Orchard, should live together as well as work together .. ?

S: Yes, yes. But clearly, if you're working in a co-op, work occupies a very important place in your life and it might be rather difficult for you to put the necessary energy into working in the co-op if you were living in a community which perhaps didn't consider work very important and maybe had a rather scornful attitude towards things like co-ops. But it wouldn't help you - you'd feel a bit isolated in the community, wouldn't you? So I think this should be very seriously considered, that people who are working in the same, let's say business, should perhaps live together in the same community ... Why is that upsetting anybody's plans? (Laughter) There's more continuity then, I think. I mean it can't be made, obviously, - it can't be made a hard and fast rule, but I think it's something worth bearing in mind.

Dhammadinna: Most people say the communities round the LBC are people against work, but they're working in different areas. You might have people in communities working in quite different things. And then to create a community life with any continuity or heart seems to be quite difficult ... People never actually spend time together.

S: Yes, yes. With energy going in different directions There's another point also, in the Movement generally, we don't want to encourage a kind of 9 to 5 attitude to work. Do you see what I mean? So it isn't really that, well, you go along to say, your co-op business and you work there from 9 to 5. When you go back to your community you forget all about the co-op. That isn't a very healthy attitude. Do you see what I mean. The business itself may require you to put yourself into it much more than that. If you've got an ordinary job where you don't take responsibility outside working hours, well, you can do that, but in the case of a Co-op business, I mean, you're not simply involved during work hours. If someone came to you and said: "Well, look, there's something to be done, would you give a hand?" Well, you couldn't very well say, "Well, I'm sorry, I'm off-duty now". You couldn't say that because you are a member of that co-op. You have a responsibility there.

So if you want to give as much time and energy to the community as you see the community's wanting and the co-op is another then there's a sort of conflict. You can't sort of carry over your co-op interest into the community and vice versa. So naturally [157] there will be tension, if not conflict sometimes. Do you see what I mean? If there's a serious situation arises within the co-op and then all the co-op members are, say, living together in a

community, you're all in it together. There's no question of well those who are in the co-op are then pulled towards the co-op whereas the other members of the community are not in it, well, don't feel the same interest and involvement. There arises almost a split within the community. So I think a business broadly speaking, would run better if all the people working in that business also lived together in the same community. That would seem, on experience so far, to be a reasonable statement of the position. Though it might be a good idea to have, say a Cherry Orchard community or whatever. Is this the case at Aryatara? Does it happen like that, that all those who work, women who work in the wholefood shop also live together?

Voices: Yes.

S: Does that help?

Voices: Yes.

S: To the extent that one wants to be in a co-op at all, yes? (Laughter)

Debbie: Bhante, there are those in the community - apart from myself, who really do want to be in a co-op and it really does work that way. The communication is quite strong.

S: Yes. There's continuity of communication. I mean, that is important. If, for instance, you've got one set of people to communicate with during working hours and another set of people to communicate with when you're back in the community, well, that can be rather difficult. You may not be able to do full justice to both. But if the communication is continuous, whether while you're working or whether while you're not working, while you're meditating or just relaxing and sitting around, I think that can help, will help communication certainly.

Debbie: I really notice a definite continuity in the community.

S: Yes. If there's continuity of communication, well, then [158] clearly you can go deeper. So I think we can broadly conclude that in the early stages of one's spiritual life and development, where it's certainly helpful to associate more closely, not just with like-minded people in a very general sense, but with people who are on, so to speak, the same specific path as you - who attach importance to the same spiritual practices. Even though it's acknowledged by all concerned in all the different spiritual practices do help one and do conduce to the same goal in the end. (Pause)

Anjali: Bhante, when you said that there aren't in the West, there aren't many Buddhists living in (spiritual) families, is that because Buddhism is too young?

S: No, I didn't say that. It's as though before you can start subdividing, you've got to have something to subdivide. That's all that I meant really. I mean, specialization, in any aspect of life is only possible when you've got a lot of people involved in a general sort of way. We've just got a limited number of people, say, involved with Buddhism, involved with the basic things like meditation, studying the Dharma. So, perhaps, it's a little premature for us to think in terms of specialization to any great extent. It would be really nice for us to specialize in, say, meditation centres. We've got one little meditation centre, that is to say Vajraloka. So we've been able to specialize to that extent, but that's to a very limited degree because there aren't that many people it seems who want to spend that amount of time, meditating. But

when there are, let's say ten thousand Order members and a hundred thousand mitras, (Laughter) probably we'll have twenty or thirty quite big meditation centres in different parts of the country. Do you see what I mean?

But, I think probably we do have enough people and certainly we have enough women, I think to be able to specialize to the extent of having a very small meditation and retreat centre (Laughter) somewhere in the country, where all of you could go from time to time, for days on end. (Laughter) Just meditate and so on, even weeks in the case of the more daring people. (Laughter) So you've got to have numbers before you can think of specializing.

Vajrasuri: You've got to have money too.

S: You've got to have money. (Laughter) I think actually, [159] that's a secondary problem. I think that once you really want to do something, you find the money. You get the money together. Well, I mean, in Australia it should be so easy. All those wide open spaces. (Laughter) Here land is very difficult to get hold of. It's either being farmed or belongs to the Ministry of Defence or something like that. But in Australia, hundreds and hundreds of miles of absolutely unoccupied bush. I'm quite sure that the FWBO in Australia will specialize in the production of Milarepas. (Laughter) We'll expect great things of (Laughter) ... Hermits, hermits of the desert - you know, one every hundred miles. (Laughter)

It seems to me that sort of specialization is possible there. Anyway, come to think of it, in Britain, here we necessarily have to think in terms of urban Buddhist centres. So the material circumstances have also to be taken into consideration.

Anyway, we do have this meditation centre in North Wales. But in a way, it's ridiculous - within two miles of a main road. But what else can you do in a place like Britain? Whereas the Americans say - 'you're always falling off the edge'. (Laughter)

So it may be that there will be specialization in different aspects of the Dharma in different parts of the Movement according to material conditions. That is also a possibility. Some people have even suggested that we move the Headquarters of the FWBO to New Zealand. They think that will be a more suitable place because they say it's more beautiful. The climate is better and there are fewer people. Others have suggested that the Headquarters ought to be moved to India because we've more Friends there. Who knows?

Dhammadinna: Do you think in terms of specialization, that age is important?

S: I'm not sure about this. My current thinking is that we tend to give too much importance to differences of age - in this country, anyway. I won't be very certain about, but I suspect that the generation gap, as it were, isn't really a natural phenomenon. I think, perhaps it's a temporary cultural phenomenon.

Dhammadinna: I know you see some older people - people go to evening classes associated with the LBC. Sometimes they say that younger people ... it's almost that the need to make plans for their own classes within the overall structure. They seem to be a bit put off by it being a young people's thing. And I think [160] one of Vangisa's plans was to start an older men's community.

S: Certainly he did seem to give a lot of support to older people. I'm really not sure about this. In the East, a lot of the, let's say, more modern Buddhist movements, - they follow this sort of pattern. They've got say, a women's section, a youth section, an old people's section and so on. I'm not sure that this is a good thing. I can't say that I'm convinced about this.

Vajrapushpa: There are some of the older people I've talked to, who say they don't want to come to classes at the LBC - I just get a feeling that they are sort of holding back anyway, and it feels like they dislike the things that are going on rather than ... the young people there ...

S: Well, that is understandable to some extent. But, on the other hand, I think the situation is a bit different, say, around a public centre where you're trying to draw people in and where you need to build bridges, as it were. That's one situation, but it's different I think within the spiritual community itself. I think within the spiritual community itself, differences with age like other mundane differences shouldn't be so strongly felt, I think if it is a question of a spiritual community. It should be possible for people belonging to different age groups to all be equal members of the same spiritual community.

Because what is the common base? The common basis, your spiritual commitment and that should transcend considerations of age. I mean, there will be for instance objective limitations, if you're an older member of a community - you won't be able to do physically, certain things that younger members do. Maybe you won't be able to take an equal share of certain responsibilities, but there can be a sort of adjustment or arrangement by mutual consent with regards to such things. I mean you could have a younger person who was handicapped, in some way.

Rosie Ong: I miss having contact with people of different ages actually, like older people, or really young people.

S: It was noticeable in India for instance, that, though India is a traditional society, or perhaps I should say, 'because it is a traditional society', in all our activities we get quite a spread of ages. It may be because of the joint family, you know, [161] the big extended family in the background. But people of different age groups seem to get on quite easily.

On retreats we quite often had quite young children, plus quite old people and all the age groups in between. This is quite usual. The old people certainly don't feel that there's no place for them because the majority of people don't feel out of place.

I mean, it might be because there's a sort of, well, - were we talking about this in this study group or the other one the other day? - Hierarchy. There's a sort of natural recognized hierarchy. The younger do defer a little bit to the older people. The older people are a bit protective towards the younger ones. Do you see what I mean? There is no sort of friction between the different age groups. Whereas there does seem to be in this country and maybe in the States. So I think it should be possible for a spiritual community to span several age groups.

In the community in Poona, along with Lokamitra and Purna, Glyn and a few others, there's a 72 year old Anagarika, - that's Mahadhammavira and there seems to be no difficulty whatever. He was going around with us on tour, the fact that he was so much older than anybody else didn't make any difference at all.

Rosie O: I think it would make it better actually to have that kind of ...

S: It would make it better in the sense that maybe younger people do supply energy and vigour and all the rest of it, but older people - other factors being equal, do have something to contribute from their experience. I mean, older people are not fools, as young people sometimes seem to think in the West. You haven't 'had it' if you're over 25. (Laughter) Well, that is the attitude, I gather in some quarters. I mean, if you're over 25, you might be seen, but you certainly should not be heard. It's the other way round now. 'The children should be seen and not heard' ; it's 'adults should be seen but not heard'. Perhaps not even seen. (Laughter)

Rosie O: It seems that we're (still reflecting the society in our centres, where old people are ...) ... and young people ...

S: It seems a rather odd development. It seems a bit difficult to understand exactly how it has come about. We know it has come about. The teenage fashions and all that sort of thing is completely a new development. But if a spiritual community is a spiritual [162] community, which means that it is based on spiritual principles, well, clearly mundane differences are secondary. One might go to the other extreme and say, "well, it's difficult to have, say, a spiritual community all of old people", because there are certain things they wouldn't be able to do. I mean physical things, so perhaps you'd need a few young people. On the other hand, you might say, well, you shouldn't have a spiritual community just of young people, they might run a bit wild; they might need the steadying influence of older people. You could say that.

What do you have to say about this thing of older people feeling threatened by younger people, somebody mentioned? Do you think that really is so? Old people not being too happy about going along to the centre, though they might be interested in Buddhism, if there are too many young people around? Is that so?

Rosie Anderson: I've heard people say that, yes. They're very interested in coming to classes but find it a bit difficult because it seems to be predominantly young people there. They feel a bit self-conscious.

S: They might feel self-conscious. Well, why should they feel self-conscious? This wouldn't happen in India. Is it because they feel, "well, maybe the young people don't want us around". Which wouldn't be the case in India. An older person wouldn't think that because he would know that wouldn't happen. Is it that?

Greta: Could it be anything to do with the type of classes that the older people are going to? Because, for example, if you go on Tuesday evenings, then most people do seem to know each other and start communicating quite intensely early on ...

(End of Side A)

Greta: ... and the older people I've seen around, they don't as far as I can recall, - they only started coming the past couple of weeks.

S: So is the real difficulty, not that they're older, but that they're new? (Voice: That's what I feel) So perhaps one needs to take special care in the case of older people, that somebody

does go up to them and talk to them so that they don't feel sort of stranded or out on a limb.

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Paula?: But it does seem to be that older people and younger people seem to feel uncomfortable together. I wonder if it has something to do with the way we regard our parents? Parents have got to be away from, as soon as possible. (Laughter)

S: I remember Vajrabodhi talking to me about this situation in Helsinki - you weren't around at that time, that was quite a long time ago - but Vajrabodhi said that he was trying very hard to get younger people along to the centre. For a long time, he only had older people, especially older women, and I'm afraid - I'm sorry to say, he didn't regard them as very promising material. Though they're very devoted. And he used to say that sometimes young people used to come along and they'd enter the centre and as soon as they looked through the door and saw that there were older people there, they just turned around and left. He said they just didn't want to have anything to do with an organization or movement where older people came along. It just wasn't for them. It just wasn't on. I think things are better now. I think things have changed quite a bit. But that was what did happen a number of times, some five, six or seven years ago. They just left, they didn't even consider staying as soon as they saw the older people there.

Vajrasuri: I think some older people think that there's - they are threatened by the idea of change. If they don't know people they really are threatened by them. (S: I think there is that too) They may find that difficult to break through, whereas younger people are more open to - everything still is a state of change for them in some ways.

S: Yes, yes. But as you get older, you do get, or you can get, very set in your ways. You don't like the idea of change. I won't say that young people are essentially more open to the idea of change in a spiritual sense, but at least they are more flexible and more adaptable very often. (Pause)

I think the main point - to connect this up with the real topic of discussion, is that any sort of, as it were, groupings that take place, say, within the movement, within any spiritual movement, really, should take place on a spiritual basis - a shared spiritual basis, not a shared mundane basis. You see what I'm getting at? If, for instance, a number of you are really into, let's say the Tara practice, it is natural that you should get together. It's natural that you should form a sort of spiritual [164] group. But the fact, for instance, let's say you all went to public school, or that you're all into electronics (Laughter), that doesn't provide the basis for your spiritual association.. Or that you've got babies.

Rosie Ong: That's got a common element to it.

S: That's a common element, but it's not a common spiritual element.

Rosie O: It's a common spiritual difficulty which becomes a ...

S: A common psychological problem. (Laughter) No there might be a common objective difficulty - solution (creche?), (Laughter) That's quite straight-forward.

Rosie O: Wouldn't that provide a sort of extended family for the children, that people with

babies live together?

S: It's not as simple as that. We've been talking about that for years. It's not so simple apparently. I'm a bit mystified. Rationally speaking, it seems quite simple, but apparently, psychologically, not. But discussions are still going on. (Laughter) There's still people interested in creating a wider family context, as it were. There's a plan even, I believe in Norwich, for a sort of street community - I think it's been called. At least it's under discussion. Anyway, let's go on. This next paragraph:

Dawn: "The 'reason for the superiority of the Mahayana over other families' is that those of Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas are inferior, being purified only by the removal of one veil, namely, conflicting emotions. The family of the followers of the Mahayana way of life is supreme, because it is purified by the removal of the double veil of conflicting emotions and primitive beliefs about reality. Therefore this family is superior to and unsurpassed by all others."

S: Are you clear about what is being talked about here? What is the basis of the distinction, the basis of the relative superiority and inferiority? It's largely, as we may say, philosophical.

What the passage is really saying is that the philosophy of the Mahayana goes deeper than the philosophy of the Hinayana. This is really what the passage is saying. But then, of course, the question arises, well, in what way is it deeper? And here of course we begin to get into technicalities. Are you familiar with this [165] doctrine of the two veils? A veil is Guenther's translation of 'avarana' - the klesa-avarana and there is the jneya-avarana, according to Mahayana thought. I've dealt with this in the Survey, so you can look it up later if you want to.

There's the Klesa-avarana - there's the veil of passions which Guenther translates as 'the veil of conflicting emotions'. And then there's the veil of cognizables - jneya - which Guenther translates as 'the veil of primitive beliefs about reality'.

Jenny: Is that the same as wrong views, or is it slightly different?

S: No, it's slightly different. Let's go into it step by step. The Hinayana holds to what is called the 'doctrine of pudgala nairatmya'. You're familiar with that? "Pudgala" means 'soul' or 'self'. Nairatmya means, let's say - 'pudgala' means 'person'; 'nairatmya' let's say means 'soul' or 'self' - nairatmya.

So 'pudgala nairatmya' means the absence of an unchanging soul or self in the so-called person. This is the Hinayana Anatma Doctrine. You're familiar with that, no doubt, that the so-called person, the so-called individual - in the ordinary sense of the word - is broken down into constituent mental states or constituent psycho-physical states rather, or constituent psycho-physical processes. What we think of as a fixed permanent unchanging ego, is in fact process, psycho-physical process. This is - putting it simply - the Hinayana teaching of 'pudgala nairatmya' - the 'soullessness' of the so-called person. 'Soullessness' meaning, or implying the absence of an unchanging soul or self. It's an application of the principle of flux or impermanence to the individual being.

Now, in the Hinayana, especially in the Sarvastivada, this was explained in a particular way.

The so-called individual was broken up into the psycho-physical elements which were called 'dharma's'. Dharmas here meaning, not teachings or anything like that, but ultimate psycho-physical elements or constituents. But the Hinayana, and especially the Mahayana, tended to see these dharmas in a sort of almost pseudo-atomic sort of way. Do you see what I mean? That they tended to think that the pudgala was nairatmya. The pudgala was made up of dharmas, but they tended to see the dharmas themselves as something fixed.

In other words, the idea of permanence, the idea of selfhood was transferred from the pudgala to the dharmas that made up the pudgala. Do you see what I mean?

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So then the Mahayana came along. The Mahayana criticized this view. The Mahayana pointed out that these dharmas also were really processes. The dharmas themselves had no Permanent, unchanging selfhood. The dharmas were nairatmya. So this was the double nairatmya teaching of the Mahayana. Not only were pudgala nairatmya but the dharmas were nairatmya, - everything was nairatmya. Everything was Sunyata. So here you have the teachings of Sarvadharmasunyata. All the elements of existence were sunyata.

So in this way a double veil was removed. The veil of conflicting passions and the veil of cognizables. According to the Mahayana, the Hinayana teaching of pudgala-nairatmya removed only the veil of passions, the klesavarana, the veil of conflicting emotions. Whereas its teaching of Dharma nairatmya also removed the inner subtler veil of distorted views about reality. Do you see what I mean? So therefore, in this passage, it is said the Mahayana family is superior to the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddha families, because its philosophy is deeper. It teaches the twofold nairatmya.

This is all rather schematic, it's all, as it were, a bit scholastic, even. But there is truth in it. The truth really being that the Mahayana, especially in the form of the Prajnaparamita - the Perfection of Wisdom teachings, is much more conscious, say, than the Abhidharma is - the Abhidharma being, of course, the Hinayana teaching. Much more conscious than the Hinayana is, than the Abhidharma is, of the limitations of words, the limitations of concepts. It's as though the Hinayana took its own Philosophy too literally.

Jenny: Bhante, relating back to what you said the other day, is that an example of the literally or the descriptive - the thing of dharmas being reified?

S: Yes, right, exactly. In some more extreme statements of the Abhidharma, almost suggested that the so-called individual was made up of sort of little atomic particles, called dharmas, which just didn't change, like little billiard balls. Whereas it wasn't like that at all.

I mean, the fact that you subdivided the so-called person into various elements for certain purposes, didn't mean that you could regard those elements into which it had been analysed, as being in themselves ultimate. They were capable of further analysis, therefore, they themselves were nairatmya. They themselves were sunyata. So this is the reason, which Gampopa gives for the Mahayana being [167] superior to other families, to those of the Sravakas and the Pratyekabuddhas. Their philosophy, so to speak, is not as deep as that of the Mahayana. In other words, the Hinayana had really got tangled up with its own terminology. Some, of course, of the great Mahayana philosophers go on to point out, you mustn't take Sunyata itself too literally. If you start taking Sunyata itself too literally, it is said there's no

hope for you. That means the teaching of Sunyata is meant as an antidote to, well, let's say, to egotism. But supposing you cling on to the teaching of Sunyata, then what hope is there for you? As it is said, supposing someone falls ill and he takes medicine. Well, the medicine will cure him. But supposing the medicine itself turns to poison, then what will cure him? So, in the same way, Sunyata, the teaching of Sunyata, is intended as an antidote to belief in an anatma. If you cling on to the teaching of Sunyata itself, what's going to save you then?

So it just underlines the fact that so called philosophical teachings, conceptual formulations of spiritual truths, aren't to be taken literally; aren't to be regarded as ends in themselves. They're just means to an end. You should use them, not you be used by them.

Rosie Ong: In the final analysis, one goes back to one's experience

S: Well, in a sense you can never get away from your experience, but you have to see what. You mustn't be misled by your own thinking, your own words. You mustn't allow that to take you too far away from actual experience. It's possible to spin a very fine web, a very complex web of theories and ideas about Sunyata itself. But that's a very different thing from the actual experience of Sunyata. I think reading the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, is a very good practice, a very good experience for anybody who is inclined to take words and thoughts too literally. Or even the Heart Sutra. Just a little text like that. It has quite a knockout sort of effect.

Marion: What was the text you mentioned Bhante, before the Heart Sutra?

S: Well, all the Perfection of Wisdom texts. (Laughter) There's about 35 of them. But there's Conze's translation of the Ratnaguna Samchayagatha, which is comparatively easy-going in the sense [168] that it is comparatively short and more inspirational than many of the Perfection of Wisdom texts. And then there's the Perfection of Wisdom (break in tape) ... it is also the Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 lines which, as I say, is translated by Conze and also is comparatively readable.

Debbie: What was the first one?

S: That was the Ratnaguna Samchayagatha - the verses on the accumulation of precious qualities. There was a seminar once on the first two chapters, which are the most important of the Ratnaguna. It has been transcribed and in part in a couple of the Mitratas, but it wasn't continued.

So Gampopa is attributing the greater superiority of the Mahayana to the fact of its, one may say, deeper philosophical view. The Mahayana doesn't say, that the Hinayana is wrong, so much as that it doesn't go deep enough. It is not so aware of the relative nature of all conceptual formulations. (Pause)

If one wants to go further into this question of the two veils, one can look up the appropriate passages in the Survey, and there are other works also. Conze has dealt with it in 'Buddhist Thought in India'. (Pause)

Anjali: Conflicting emotions, Bhante? (Do you suppose a) translation of passion?

S: Klesa, yes. Let's go a little bit into that. Klesas, what is klesa? The word 'Klesa' in Sanskrit has got a sort of double meaning. It's 'Klesa' in Sanskrit; 'Kilesa' in Pali. Klesa is 'that which afflicts', also 'that which defiles'. The two ideas are closely connected here. So, it's quite a strong term. You could say that Klesas are those unskilful mental states, especially those unskilful emotions by which you are defiled and which afflict you - by which you are afflicted and defiled. Hence Guenther's translation as 'conflicting emotions'. He's not quite literal. He certainly does convey the idea of turbulence and disturbance, but I think the negativity is not sufficiently conveyed; because you could presumably have, skilful emotions in conflict, but that is certainly not implied in term 'klesa'

So I mean, maybe one should consider this fact, that the passions, in the sense of 'unskilful mental states' - as virtually [169] 'unskilful emotions' - let's say: hatred, jealousy, fear, craving do not only defile you, they afflict you. You suffer from them. If you look at your own experience, you probably will find that there are certain emotions which you don't enjoy. You experience them quite strongly; maybe you're motivated by them; maybe you wouldn't like to give them up or find them very difficult to give up. But nonetheless, you can't enjoy them. You suffer from them in fact. Think of an emotion like jealousy. That's a very good example. It doesn't do anybody any good. It certainly doesn't do the jealous person any good, but they find it very difficult to give up perhaps. It's perhaps one of the most obsessive of all the negative emotions and you're certainly 'afflicted' by it - if you do suffer from it.

Jenny: Why is it difficult to give up?

S: Why do you think?, (Laughter) You mean, you're referring to jealousy especially? Well, why is it difficult to give up jealousy? Well, what is jealousy first of all?

Voice: Craving.

S: It involves craving, it seems.

Rosie Ong: It's very tied to the self, isn't it?

S: Very tied to the self, yes.

Voice: A frustrated possessiveness.

S: A frustrated possessiveness, yes. Possessiveness is difficult to give up because, yes, the self is involved. But is it just possessiveness? Doesn't it involve even something more? When you're jealous of somebody, say, consider a concrete example: try to see what's happening.

Voice: It's very destructive.

S: It's very destructive, yes.

Dawn: In popular songs, the degree of jealousy is tied up with [170] the degree of 'love', in inverted commas.

S: But no doubt it is, because where there is, love of a sort, with your inverted commas, there's almost bound to be jealousy. But what then is happening in the case of that sort of

'love'? It's easy to say it's possessive, but why is it possessive? In what does the possessiveness consist?

Greta: You want to have power over.

S: You want to have power over - but why do you want to have power over?

Voice: You're addicted ...

S: You're addicted - yes.

Voice: You want to be completed by someone ...

S: You want to be completed, yes. You want to have power over, say, another person because you've invested, it would seem, part of yourself in that other person, and if that other person goes away, if that other person leaves you, it's like a part of yourself is being torn away. So it's as though a part of your life has gone quite literally.

So you become possessive You want control of that person. You're very alert to any development which threatens your control of that person and very often, the situation is self-defeating because maybe the more you hang on to them, cling on to them, the more they'll feel like leaving you; the more they'll feel like running away. (Laughter)

So the rudimentary jealousy is such a powerful emotion because your life is almost bound up with that sort of possessiveness, with that sort of investment of a part of yourself in another person and that's why jealousy is so akin to hate and why it can be so destructive and sometimes people can say, "I'd rather kill that person than let them belong to somebody else." Yes, this is how you can feel. This is what you can say sometimes. This, if you're not careful can be considered a manifestation of love. (Laughter) So jealousy, is really a very terrible thing and it certainly doesn't give you any pleasure. It's a source of unrest, [171] torment, dissatisfaction, fear, anxiety, but the original cause is just your investment of part of yourself in another person. It's as though you placed a part of your life in some person's hands. You're living through them almost to some extent. You're not living your own life. You're not your own person. You're dependent upon them for a portion of your own life. So to lose them feels like death, or like the threat of death. So you react with real desperation. That's quite different from a situation in which you objectively need a certain person for a certain purpose and can't very well do without them. That's a bit different, though sometimes the two things are mixed up together and very difficult to separate. But real jealousy is the product of an intense, unhealthy, perhaps unconscious, investment of part of oneself in another person. A projection is also involved presumably.

Annie Murphy: Vajrasuri asked just now is it possible to identify that part of yourself which invests that ...?

S: Well, perhaps we have to watch words here. I've spoken of 'part of yourself' - well, clearly that's a metaphorical expression. One could put it another way: when your basic security depends upon somebody else; you don't believe in yourself unless somebody else believes in you. Maybe it's somebody else's love that makes you feel that you exist, that you're worthwhile, that it's worth living and if that goes, well, it's as though the ground is cut from

under your feet.

Marion: It seems to be an inappropriate adult response. If you were a child, it's quite appropriate.

S: Yes, because if your mother is taken away, if she disappears, well quite objectively you've lost your support. You've lost your security. So one could say that jealousy is an infantile negative emotion. It's the sort of emotion that a mature person, quite apart from any spiritual considerations, just shouldn't feel.

Voice: But you can feel it even if you had your parents there all the time because maybe they haven't give you the emotional support ...

S: Hmm. It's as though the mature person as I've said, even apart from the spiritual considerations, should feel secure within themselves. I think it's only a basically insecure person, and a [172] person who doesn't value themselves, who has no sense of their own worth, that makes this sort of emotional investment in another person. And so long as the other person's love is there, it's as though the other person is telling them, "Well, you're OK. You're wanted. You're worth something." They can't believe it themselves that; they've got to have somebody else telling it to them and if that person doesn't tell it any more and if that person goes away, that is interpreted not only as that person no longer giving them worth, but even that person now telling them that they're worthless. That makes them feel really dreadful. I think an element of this is found in a lot of people. Maybe the majority of people don't experience this to an extreme degree, but they experience a touch of it at least from time to time.

Linda: I think there's an element of it when you won't acknowledge other people's good qualities. They're superior to you. You think somehow because you haven't got it, you're jealous of them having it.

S: Is that jealousy or is that envy? I think there is a distinction between the two things, though what you say is correct.

Vajrasuri: What about fear being one of these things one suffers from ... ? Turbulent emotions, unskilful ...

S: It's the irrational fear. So again irrational fear is often bound up with insecurity, isn't it? And lack of confidence. Fear to go out in the dark. Well, it might be a rational fear, if there really are bogeymen around. (Laughter) But if there aren't, and you don't consciously believe in bogeymen, perhaps you maintain that you don't and never have done (Laughter), well then, if you are afraid to go into the dark, well, then that's an irrational fear, isn't it? Whereas if you wake up in the night thinking, "Oh, my God! What will I do if I lost all my money?" and feel really afraid, (Laughter) well, that's an irrational fear because, presuming say, nothing had happened to cause you to think that you might suddenly lose all your money - you just suddenly think that for no apparent reason. This suggests that there's some anxiety deep down in you that fears of losing your money.

Vajrasuri: It's that fear that arises that's not attached to anything, to nothing whatsoever. You can't hook it on to anything.

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S: Yeah, that is perhaps a sort of sense of the precariousness of individual being. It's an existential thing. (Laughter) That you, as the individual can be snuffed out like that. The fact that you are an individual means that you can die. So therefore, the consciousness of your existence is inseparably connected with a consciousness of death, and therefore, fear, because the unenlightened individual doesn't want to die. But the fact that he exists as a separate individual means that he can die. So there's fear! It's only when, for want of a better term, 'egotism' is transcended that there's no more fear. Because there's no more identification with one's ego.

Vajrasuri: Whereabouts on the spiral path does that come in or only right at the very end, before Buddhahood or something?

S: Certainly, when you enter the stream, when you really and truly Go for Refuge, well, that is a kind of death. You go beyond individuality then, beyond the ego, one might say, to some extent. Maybe it's not a total death, but it's enough for the time being to be getting on with. That's why it represents a real transformation - a transformation is a death, a death is a transformation. No real change, no radical change without a death in terms of what you were before. We were talking about old people a little while ago. Maybe they fear death more than young people because they are more rigid, not just because they are nearer death literally. But change threatens them much more.

Vajrasuri: The more you meditate, the more that irrational fear seems to appear.

S: Well, the more aware you are of yourself as an individual, therefore of yourself as threatened by death.

Rosie Ong: Someone said that fear is like if you reduce all the emotions, (you are somehow left with) the primal emotional, which is fear.

S: It's primal in the sense that it's inseparably bound up with the individual. Rather the individual's consciousness of himself is bound up with reflexive consciousness. Reflexive consciousness means that you are conscious that you are conscious. You can [174] therefore be conscious that you could be unconscious, i.e. dead. (Laughter) An animal has no problems about death. An animal apparently doesn't think about death because an animal cannot think of itself as living.

Rosie Ong: Does that mean that all the other emotions come from that thing?

S: No, because an animal feels, one might say, emotions. Though perhaps, one should just use the expression 'feelings'. Feels, even, is conscious of, hunger, craving, anger, frustration, even jealousy. Animals can be possessive. A dog can be possessive. Well, a dog isn't a very good example. Maybe he's learned it from human beings. I've met neurotic dogs and neurotic cats. (Laughter) They picked it up from human beings. Yes, if you're not careful, if you keep a dog, you'll make it neurotic. You can study your own neurosis in the dog. (Laughter) I've seen this, that pets have got the same problems as their owners. (Laughter) Yes, they've learned them. They've acquired them from their owners, I think.

Voice: How come one of my cats is a bit neurotic and the other one isn't then?

S: Split personality. (Laughter) Split personality on the owner's part.

Rosie O: Is there a schematic division of the emotions?

S: Well, that's a very difficult question. I'm not fully up to the latest psychological discoveries on this topic. There are many ways of schematizing the emotions. A very useful one, I think, a very helpful one, though it's 300 years old, I think it's still valid to a great extent, is Spinoza's. Are you familiar with that in his 'Ethics'? There's a copy of it right behind me. Yes. It's relatively simple and straightforward. He sort of deduces the emotions and in that way he gives a systematic, organized account of them.. I mean, for instance, he defines love as 'pleasure, accompanied by the idea of an external cause' , (Laughter) and so on. And hatred as 'pain, accompanied by the idea of an external cause'.

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Marion: You mentioned earlier, skilful conflicting emotions.

S: I suggested that Guenther's translation of 'klesa' as 'conflicting emotions' may not be fully appropriate in as much as it doesn't suggest the negativity of the term 'klesa'. And in any case, one could perhaps - I didn't say very definitely but one could perhaps - have positive emotions that were in conflict. I was thinking for instance, of a case like, well, maybe you want to get on with your meditation, which is certainly a positive emotion, but you also feel, well, there are people to be helped and right on your own doorstep and you do feel some compassion towards them. So you could have a situation in which these two, quite positive emotions in themselves, skilful emotions, are in conflict. Do you see what I mean? So, therefore, conflicting emotions, is perhaps not altogether an appropriate translation of 'klesa', because klesa represents definitely unskilful mental and emotional states. But certainly Guenther well-represents that element of conflict and turbulence,

I think, very likely, people in general, as a result of their own experience, they've got a very odd idea about the emotions. Suppose you say of someone, "Oh, she's very emotional!". Well, what do you mean? Well, she's a disturbed sort of person, maybe, heading in the direction of neurosis, not to say nervous breakdown. The emotions are sort of something disturbed or disturbing or a bit upsetting. Things you sort of suffer from. Things you sort of can't help. We don't think of emotions usually in the sense of very positive, sort of serene, pleasurable qualities. But that's how they should really be. Do you see what I mean? Based on our own experience we think of emotions as rather troubled things. You say of someone, "Oh, she is emotionally involved." The way you say it suggests that you feel rather sorry for her. Whereas Metta is an emotion; Mudita is an emotion; Karuna is an emotion; Upekkha is an emotion; Sradhdha is an emotion; Mukti is an emotion; peace is an emotion. These are all emotions. This is what we get very much in the figure of Tara. Tara represents, among other things, this very serene, positive emotional quality. Nothing abstract. So, it's very important in the spiritual life, that you bring your emotions under control.

(End of tape 7)

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S: It's very important in the spiritual life, that you bring your emotions under control.. which doesn't mean sort of rigidly harnessing them, but eliminating this element of turbulence, of turmoil, and conflict, and affliction ... and defilement. One's emotions are usually, you know,

sticky, contaminated, whipped-up, disturbed, self-centred ... but they don't have to be like that - they need not be like that.

Dhammadinna: What's the difference between emotion and feeling?

S: Emotion is more complex than feeling. Feeling is usually just either pleasure or pain. Emotions are built up, so to speak, on that sort of basis. (We timed the discussion quite well again. (sounds of tea pouring)) Before we go on about, you know, this question of the emotions, as I mentioned for most people - most people's experience as if the emotions are something rather turbulent. People usually experience them in that sort of form - so that there might be a sort of temptation to think that, well, if you're going to get on with the spiritual life, you've just got to cut out emotion ...eh. It's just too troublesome; it's just such a nuisance, and some people do actually sort of try to do that kind of thing - but this is not the Mahayana approach; it's certainly not the Vajrayana approach. In both the Mahayana and the Vajrayana, perhaps more even in the Vajrayana, it is emphasized that, purified emotion, one might say emotion purified from turbulence; emotion purified from conflict is absolutely essential. There's no real spiritual life; there's no real spiritual path; there's no spiritual experience without them ... So it is very much a question of purifying the emotions - not getting rid of the [177] emotions as such (pause - 3-4 words indistinct) But there's some people who have suffered so much from their emotions that they think "Oh, it's better to be without them altogether ... just repress them" - That is a sort of, you might say, 'Hinayana' approach, in that that doesn't do justice to the genuine Hinayana approach. It is that sort of rather coldly over-intellectual approach to the spiritual life, which negates or tries to negate the emotions.

Rosie Ong: There's also the popular idea that emotions, even positive ones are a bit silly ...

S: Why do you think that is? Why do you think that idea is current? Is there any truth in it?

Dhammadinna: It's sort of a modern day cynicism.

Rosie O: You talk about the kind-hearted fool or something like that, don't you?

Voices indistinct: ...

S: But don't you find that sometimes when people are emotional and when they're not actually afflicted by the emotions, that they are sometimes quite silly - that they do behave in a silly way. Yes? (voices in assent) (Loud laughter) That sort of silly emotionality is not so bad as the afflicted kind, the tormented kind, but it isn't yet really and truly positive.

There's an element of, well, just silliness; an element of unmindfulness, of superficiality, of frothiness about it. Do you know what I mean? There is this sort of thing that perhaps gives the emotions a bad name in another kind of way. I mean, emotions are divorced from mindfulness without any real stability or depth. (pause)

Marion: There's something else I was thinking about the emotions, - they're not trusted because they're very unreliable and subject to change quite a lot and it's difficult to cope with change so we mistrust the emotions.

S: But the more deep, the more genuine, the more purified the emotion is, the less it changes.

Hm? Not that there's anything [178] rigid, but it's reliable. Supposing you're friends with someone. Supposing they have a very definite love for you. If that love is free from the element of turbulence; if it's free from possessiveness, free, from jealousy, you can count on that sort of love much more ... can't you ? You can rely on that sort of love much more but if it's mixed up with possessiveness, with jealousy and so on, you can't really rely upon it. It can even change to hate. So the more positive an emotion is, the more stable it becomes - the more reliable it becomes. Emotion is no worse in this respect than thought itself. If the emotions are always changing, well, so are the thoughts, so are the views, so are the ideas. Hmm? So are the judgements, the understanding is changing all the time too and very often in accordance with changes in the emotional state. So it isn't that the emotions are always changing, whereas ideas remain relatively unchanged - that isn't really the case.

Kay: Bhante, do you recommend that we practice the four Brahmaviharas?

S: If you can, Yes, but we emphasize that the Metta Bhavana so much because that is the basis. You can't practice Karuna Bhavana or Mudita Bhavana unless you've got a solid basis of Metta. Yes, I have said that I would like to see more people actually practising all four Brahmaviharas, yes, starting with the Metta Bhavana. Perhaps if you're on a solitary retreat or a meditation retreat you could do this, hmm? Say, a session of Metta Bhavana and then , maybe after a break, a session of the Karuna Bhavana, then a session of the Mudita Bhavana, finishing up with Upekkha Bhavana. This would be very good. One could sort of distribute them through the day, with maybe Mindfulness of Breathing, or Mantra recitations in between. This would be very good practice. I don't mean to suggest, you know, that we confine ourselves to the Metta Bhavana. That is what we actually teach. (Long Pause)

The Metta Bhavana is what we actually teach in our meditation centres and classes, but we teach the Metta Bhavana rather than the other Brahmaviharas because Metta is the basis of them all, so you have to have that first.

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Jenny (?): I've heard that you said that the Metta Bhavana practice could be the only practice you need that you could take it all the way to Enlightenment. Would you say something about that?

S: That is not the Theravada view. The traditional Theravada view is that Metta Bhavana can take you only a short distance but that does not seem to be really what the Buddha actually taught. It does seem to me more and more that you can perhaps, go all the way with Metta Bhavana because Metta Bhavana leads naturally into Karuna, Mudita and even Upekkha and even into a sort of Insight. It was touched on by Dhammarati in his talk at the LBC the other week, and he discussed this with me beforehand. That one of the things that you have to do with the Metta Bhavana is to make it unlimited. You remember that the fifth stage - first of all you think of self, friend, neutral person, enemy - you try to devote the same Metta equally to all four. You try to remove the barriers which are usually present between yourself and those other people so if you can really do this what does it mean - if you can really feel the same Metta towards yourself, a friend, a neutral person and an enemy it means you've really overcome egotism and what is Insight if not that? Do you see what I mean? And then you go on to develop Metta towards all living beings, so if you can actually feel that for even an instant, then that is surely, I would say, equal to an instant of Insight. - you've removed the barrier between yourself and others; so if you can go on developing that, well, as far as I can

see, you could develop into a fully fledged Bodhisattva in that way, without recourse to any other practice. It's all included in this one, if you practice the Metta to a sufficient extent, in sufficient depth. So I really feel, more and more that the Metta Bhavana has been very much undervalued in Buddhism, especially in Modern Buddhism - especially perhaps in the Theravada. I do know some teachers of this new Burmese method of Satipatthana - the so-called Vipassana. They really undervalue Metta. Not all of them do now, but originally they all undervalued it. And you were told almost that you were wasting your time doing the Metta Bhavana. This was a silly, you know, sentimental little practice - just suitable perhaps for beginners. "Real" Meditation was Vipassana - this is what one used to hear. In some meditation centres, I know, Metta Bhavana was banned - You were not allowed to do it while you were at that centre any more than you were allowed to do Pujas or to repeat Mantras. No - only what they thought of as Vipassana! [180] It seems to me they entirely misunderstood. Again it seems to me that positive emotion, positive spiritual emotion is so important in the spiritual life. There's really no spiritual life without it. In a sense, it almost doesn't matter that you don't know the details of the doctrinal teachings - if you have an abundance of this positive spiritual emotion ... it's so important! There's no progress without it at all I would say, virtually.

Vajrasuri: It seems to be one of the things we're offering in Sydney which is different from anything that people are actually responding to that it is ...

S: Well, I'm glad to hear that you are offering it because it should really radiate from every centre, there should be a different atmosphere as you walk in. It should be tangible. It should be tangible in any Buddhist centre, of the FWBO or any other ... unfortunately that is not always the case. Do you mean that technically other Buddhist groups don't have the same emphasis on Metta as [we] do?

Vajrasuri: Mmm.

S: Ah, that's interesting!

Vajrasuri: There's a lot of difference in those other groups in Sydney! ... that that practice is one that people are responding to they're very open about what they like and what they don't like and that's positive.

S: They haven't perhaps encountered that before.

Vajrasuri: No!

S: That's extraordinary, because one would have thought it was such an obvious thing in Buddhism and it's been mentioned repeatedly in scriptures anyway. Clearly it mustn't be confined to the meditation room - to express itself.. (Both speakers talking at the same time making both unclear!)..

Vajrasuri: It seems to me almost as though that practice is so simple that people over-look it, in fact ...

S: It's not that the Australians are healthier than people over here (Laughter)

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Vajrasuri: It's possible (Laughter)

S: I have heard that the New Zealanders are claiming to be healthier ... (Laughter) ... I don't doubt it for a minute. (laughter)

Marion: I find I get a bit confused between openness and Metta, sometimes. I think if I've got Metta, I should be open.

S: I think if you've got Metta, you don't have to bother with whether you're open or not. (laughter)

Marion: I'm trying to get to Metta by being open which is ...

S: I don't even like this word "open" very much, in a way. It suggests a sort of passivity: just laying yourself open whatever happens to come along. Just taking it in. Whereas Metta isn't like that. Metta is definitely outward going. You have a positive effect on other people - a positive effect on circumstances. If you're just sitting around being open, well, perhaps you don't have any effect on anything - you're just open.. (laughter)

Marion: I mean "receptivity" more ...

S: Even "receptivity" - it suggests just something coming from the other person, so to speak, whereas in the case of Metta, there's something coming from you - but it certainly doesn't preclude something coming from another person.. It certainly doesn't shut that out; far from it! I'd say metta, certainly by implication, includes openness and receptivity. But openness just by itself, has a sort of slightly, almost - I wouldn't say "negative", feel to it, but "deprived", feel to it (laughter) as though you're waiting for something you haven't got ... rather than contributing something you do have, at the same time being quite open to the idea that of receiving somebody else's contribution. I think Metta is the more inclusive word, I would say, yeah? Unfortunately, we don't have a proper equivalent in English. "Love" is much too overworked ... and we get this misunderstood.

Megha: Bhante, you talk about actually developing Karuna Bhavana and so on. What are the actual practices?

S: Well the practice is really quite simple, once you've developed the Metta, because you have to call into mind the suffering of other beings and Karuna should be your natural response - assuming you to [182] be endowed with Metta - your natural response when you encounter suffering. So in a sense, a Karuna practice isn't really needed. Do you see what I mean? If you've got Metta, as soon as you see suffering, spontaneously, the Metta is transformed into Karuna, yeah? For instance, say, you're on retreat and you want actually to do the Karuna Bhavana, well, you can just call to mind that there's people who do suffer and the purpose of doing that would not be to strengthen your Metta - that would be there as a basis - but to strengthen your determination to be of help, hmm? You could do Karuna Bhavana with regard to say people in your immediate circle who are sick or who are experiencing difficulties of various kinds.

Think of ex-untouchable Buddhist friends in India, some of whom perhaps during the time

that you are meditating are being attacked or murdered or raped or whatever. This is all still going on and that can strengthen your determination to help them; maybe to raise funds to send out. Do you see what I mean? I think probably, I'm a bit hesitant here, it isn't a thing just to develop Karuna for the sake of Karuna, hmm? That could be a bit self-indulgent, but to develop Karuna in order to motivate oneself more, actually to relieve suffering. So the procedure would be, you develop Metta Bhavana first, you go through that practice in the usual way and then to develop Karuna you just think of people that you know of, with whom you are in contact, directly or indirectly, who are in difficulties, even suffering, and whom you could help, and you sort of express your determination that you will help them.

Linda?: Would it be proper to call Karuna the reflex action of ...

S: In a way, provided that one doesn't understand reflex as something that happens mechanically, as something reactive, huh?. Yes, you could say that ... and in the same way if you think of people that are happy, well, you rejoice with them ... there's no envy in your mind. Automatically, spontaneously, if you're full of metta, and then you call to mind people who are happy, people who are getting on well, progressing, well, you're really happy too. You share their happiness, you rejoice in their merits. For instance think of our friends in India who are working so well and so hard and you can rejoice in their merits. And you can think of the happiness of people who are meditating and feel happy with them - or of people who are on retreat; feel happy with them; happy that they are able to be there and have that experience for so many weeks and so on. In this way, you make yourself emotionally positive in so many ways. (Pause) ... So, far from trying to eliminate emotions from the spiritual life, we should cultivate it in its positive form as much as we possibly can. And this is also where Kalyana Mitrata [183] comes in because through Kalyana Mitrata, among other things, you generate and intensify positive emotions between yourselves, huh? That's what one might call a continual reciprocity of good will. It seems such a pity that our emotions are usually of the afflicted variety - that our emotions are a source of misery very often, rather than a source of joy ...

Rosie: How about the practice of equanimity?

S: Well this also depends very much on the practice of Metta. I mentioned developing Metta equally towards all and you do the same with Karuna and you do the same with Mudita. You feel compassion equally towards people who are suffering whether they're friends of yours or whether they're enemies ... and the same with the happiness of people: you rejoice in that, you share that whether they're people who are against you or whether they're people who are for you. So you develop equanimity by stressing and developing this aspect of sameness of the positive emotions - that you feel the same positive emotions towards all. You don't pick and choose. It's not that you want to feel the positive emotions towards your friends and not towards those who are not your friends. Hmm? So Upekkha emerges when you feel equally towards all - the same Metta. I mean, you know very well what happens:- supposing you suddenly meet a couple of people, one is a very good friend of yours and the other is not a friend at all. So what is your sort of reaction in that situation ... sometimes.

Marion: To discriminate and choose to communicate with the person that you like ...

S: Yes. Yes. Supposing they both invite you to go for a walk with them - well what's your natural (unclear - voices in assent) ... to go with the one you like ... yeah ... but supposing

you've developed real Metta towards all - well, you feel the same towards both of those people - so when they both invite you to go for a walk and you can't go for a walk with both and you've got to choose, there's no conflict. Because you're equally happy to go with either - so you just decide according to circumstances ... who'd benefit more or something of that sort, - you don't feel that sort of emotional conflict that you would feel perhaps if both of the people who ask you to go for a walk are ... you wanted to go with one and not with the other. So Metta felt equally towards all, you know, conduces to equanimity and therefore, to absence of conflict ... (pause) Supposing you take a party of children out for a walk, maybe one of them falls into the river, hmm? Let's say [184] two of them fall into the river - one is yours and one is someone else's child (laughter) ... well, conflict-conflict! But if you've got Metta towards all, well, no conflict. Well, that person's only got one child, I've got three, all right (loud laughter covering up words) ... because that's the reasonable thing to do. (More Laughter) Don't take it too literally - that primitive, possessive maternal instinct would not come into operation (laughter). But try to get the substance of what I'm getting at; because we're so riddled by our preferences, our likes and dislikes, especially where people are concerned. I think we really need to watch ourselves and really develop Metta, towards all and really try to treat all alike.

Vajrasuri: It really goes deeper than we even have an inkling of ... and our biases ...

S: Yes.

Vajrapushpa: It's interesting to ... positivity gives you space to think very clearly.

S: Yes, indeed! Your thinking is distorted by your likes and dislikes. Yeah. When you meet a new person, watch your own reactions very carefully, especially your reactions of attraction or otherwise, hmm? Certain people you're automatically attracted to, others not attracted maybe the opposite. Maybe if you're young and the other person is old, you're not going to be attracted, you probably won't want to get to know them, or talk to them, or go for a walk with them, and vice versa ... Think of how we're influenced by even if someone is physically attractive it need not even be connected with sex. If the other person is a bit bent or a bit bald and wrinkled, well you feel less attracted very often even if it's someone of the same sex - than you would if they were young and sprightly, with a nice smile and all the rest of it, without your being aware of it, your reaction is different. You discriminate constantly.

Jenny?: What seems to be quite a popular one is astrology (S: Mmm!) .. "are you a Scorpio, oh I never get on with Scorpio!" (laughter)

S: Yes, yes.

Marion: There seems to be the conflict between that sort of ... how to develop that and being aware of (unclear) ... and tendencies ... (unclear)

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S: Well, one is based upon pure reactivity, and the other is more like a sensitivity to shared spiritual interests, huh? If you're drawn to somebody else because they share the same spiritual interest as you, that is a different thing and that can sometimes completely override other considerations. If there's a common spiritual element there, you could be drawn to somebody solely on account of that, who normally you wouldn't care to become friends with.

You might normally think, well, they're just not your sort of person. But if you share a definite spiritual interest you may be drawn to them none the less. That would certainly represent a triumph of creativity over reactivity. (Pause) Your friendship might bridge the age gap or even the gap of education, or race or culture, or whatever. (Long pause) All right let's go on, next ... (unclear voices) (laughter) ... 'the causal characteristic' who'd like to read that?

Kay: "'The causal characteristic' is the Awakened and the Unawakened family. The Awakened is characterized by the fact that the distinctive mark of the attainment of the goal (Enlightenment) is visible, whereas in the Unawakened this is not visible, because the goal (Enlightenment) has not yet been achieved."

S: Mmm. This is just a little bit scholastic - we're concerned with the classification of the Mahayana spiritual family and the summary has referred to a classification of the word 'causal characteristic'. So here one is simply saying that within the Mahayana spiritual family there are two sub-families: there's the family of the Awakened - those who've reached the goal of the Mahayana, and the Unawakened: that is to say those who've not reached the goal of the Mahayana. They belong to the spiritual family of the Mahayana, nonetheless, whether they're Awakened or whether they're Unawakened whether they've reached the goal of the Path, the goal of that particular family or not. This is quite a simple straight-forward sort of sub-division, huh? You belong to that particular spiritual family whether or not you've actually reached the goal that you're all in quest of. In this case you belong to the Mahayana spiritual family even if you're not yet a Buddha or even a Bodhisattva, because that is your goal. (Pause) Anyway, let's go on a bit ...

Anjali: What does that mean about visible and not visible? Does it mean some physical characteristic?

S: No, when ... the expression 'visible' is not to be taken literally. [186] It's when the goal has actually been attained and becomes, as it were, apparent. It's not merely latent but is manifest, visible to yourself and presumably to others ... the potential has become actual.

Vajrasuri: It's so easy to put yourself down and think you're not a Bodhisattva and you go way down into one of those lower realms, but that's not right, is it? It's as if you need some form of (end) vision, a push to attain to the longing in a positive way ...

S: It's as I was saying earlier ... in the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra that if you even offer a flower to the Buddha, well, in a sense you're sure of Enlightenment ... because you've taken the first step, you're on the Path already even if you've just performed that simple action of devotion, huh? To find the path is one of the most difficult things ... to be a human being, to be born into or enter into after birth, Buddhist surroundings, be able to read the sutras, be able to practise meditation, be able to go on retreat, - well, we've done all these things - the battle is more than half won already!

Do you see what I mean? (laughter) So one shouldn't do oneself down - one shouldn't always think, "Poor little me, what sort of progress can I make?" etc. etc. That's ridiculous - you've come so far already. (Pause) ... You realize it's so, when maybe you meet some of your old friends, who haven't changed in the last five or six or twenty years. They're just where they were - where you left them perhaps even more stuck in a rut than they were but you have changed (Pause) ... All right, let's go on.

Voice: "This awakening occurs when the family is free from adverse, and supported by favourable, conditions. Without this it is unawakened."

S: So within the Mahayana spiritual family, two sub-families have been distinguished: the Awakened who have realized the goal of the Mahayana path and the Unawakened who haven't. So then the text goes on to say that the awakening occurs when the family - this is to say, the individual member of the family - "is free from adverse and supported by favourable conditions", without this he or she isn't Awakened. Let's go on to see what those conditions are.

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Voice: "There are four adverse conditions: To be born in unfavourable circumstances and without an inclination towards Enlightenment; to be opinionated and to suffer from the evil of the double veil (of conflicting emotions and primitive beliefs about reality)."

S: "There are four adverse conditions: to be born in unfavourable circumstances". That's pretty obvious in a general way but the note says that in the next chapter we are going to be dealing with that in detail so we need not go into it now ... "and without an inclination towards Enlightenment" ... that's a very adverse condition indeed.

You might raise the question: "Well, how can you belong to the Mahayana family, even belong to the Unawakened sub-family within that, without an inclination towards Enlightenment?" What do you think is the answer? Can you have a natural tendency towards Enlightenment, even though you've no inclination towards Enlightenment? (Pause) Do you see what I mean? There's this classification into families and you are supposed a member of the Mahayana family - that is to say, so to speak, a natural tendency towards Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings rather than towards Arhantship - Enlightenment for your own sake - or towards Pratyekabuddhaship, hmm? But within the Mahayana spiritual family all those with that tendency towards - a natural tendency towards - a natural fitness towards, for Supreme Perfect Enlightenment, you belong to the Unawakened sub-family, hmm? So is it possible that you nevertheless should be without an inclination towards Enlightenment? Is it possible for you to be subject to those four adverse conditions?

Annie Murphy: Is it the "cut-off" family, Bhante?

S: No we're concerned with the Mahayana family, the unawakened members of that Mahayana family.

Rosie O: Doesn't it mean, just in this life?

S: Well I suppose it could be for the time being - it could be for the time being, they don't have that inclination even though, so to speak, deep down there is that basic tendency. But it seems a little contradictory even so. Maybe the author is getting a bit, you know, involved in his classifications and so on.

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Daphne?: There are people who have a natural generosity and do think of others a lot and who don't aspire to Enlightenment ...

S: But actually in the case of those who belong to the Mahayana spiritual family, you're presumably concerned with a natural tendency towards full Enlightenment itself, yeah? (Pause) So in the case of such people one of the four adverse conditions are their not actually realizing what they've got a tendency towards is that they're without an inclination towards it. So it does seem a bit inconsistent, doesn't it? Either Gampopa himself is a bit inconsistent unless there's another explanation we haven't thought of.

Dhammadinna: Might it have to do with how much effort we've got towards it.

S: It could be that the translation's a little bit at fault - it's not really "inclination in the English sense. Hmm? Anyway, perhaps we should just leave it and perhaps take it as a reminder that we ought to read even people like Gampopa quite critically. I suppose most of you have read this book before, hmm? Have you noticed this when you read it? Probably not, so it just means we have to read quite critically and not think that any author is necessarily infallible ... And then "to be opinionated" - ah, opinionatedness, taking the English word quite literally since we don't know what the Tibetan word is here. It's quite easy to see how that could be an adverse condition. You could have all sorts of opinions about Supreme Perfect Enlightenment itself, hmm? Opinionatedness, to be opinionated, is a bit more than just having opinions, isn't it? What does it suggest?

Marion: Having fixed opinions - they're quite rigid.

S: Fixed opinions; you insist on your opinions. In this way, opinionatedness, comes quite close to being the victim of micchaditthis, hmm? (Pause) This is one of the things - I hope I'm not revealing any secrets, but one of the things we notice at the beginning of the Tuscany course - the first two or three weeks, all the Order Members commented - all the Order Members who were taking classes and study groups - pointed out that there seemed to be a lot of opinions flying around, hmm? Do you see what I mean? I mean, it's as though people take their opinions, by which one means ideas or even quite strong convictions on certain topics, without really having [189] the right to an opinion, because they just don't know enough about it hmm? Do you see what I mean? You've got very strong opinions about something but really you don't know anything about that particular subject; there's that sort of tendency in people; to be very sure of themselves even though they're not at all well-informed and not to realize that.

Dhammadinna: Is that to do with Dharmic - opinions about the Dharma? as such or more general sort of sense?

S: In this case, it was more of that sort, yeah? but I think it extends to other areas of life, huh? I mean there have been several references in the newspapers recently to armchair strategists. In fact there are thousands of people with plans about what to do in the Falkland crisis and so on. Most of them don't have any detailed knowledge at all - the information is taken over from the newspapers or perhaps their favourite newspaper. They're full of opinions on the subject and you find a lot of this. People who very readily give their opinion. In fact, they're encouraged to do so by all sorts of radio and TV programs - to give their opinions as though the opinion of the ordinary man or woman in the street is of some sort of value. It may have value as telling you what their opinions are, which may be relevant for certain political purposes, but it's not relevant if you're simply searching for truth, hmm?

Vajrapushpa: We tend to think that if there are a large number of people with the same opinion then it must be the truth.

S: Yes. For instance, I think tomorrow in the House of Commons, there's going to be a debate on hanging, capital punishment - well, lots of people have got opinions on this subject but they're usually not very informed opinions. So it may be useful to know what people's opinions are, but not as a guide to one's own thinking ... necessarily. So why are people so prone to have opinions?

Dhammadinna: In a way we determine ourselves by our opinions - we create a sense of self by what you believe in.

S: But why do we need that? Why can't we just refrain from having opinions where we don't have knowledge?

Marion: We think we have knowledge and the basis for experience ...

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S: I don't see why we do that when we so obviously don't have knowledge ... (chuckles) I personally find this, that not only in this country but in India that people want me to have all sorts of opinions which I don't feel I'm able to have, hmm? Do you see what I mean? It's as though there's a sort of pressure - a compulsion almost to produce an opinion on a subject about which one knows nothing - which one hasn't studied. How can one be expected to have an opinion? In a sense of ...

END OF SIDE One

SIDE Two

Dhammadinna: ... What does the word actually mean? Does it mean a view without a considered basis or could it mean both?

S: Oh I'm not sure what the literal meaning is.

Dhammadinna: ... a genuine opinion or sort of a superficial view of something and that ...

S: I think it means simply what you think or what you opine - an opinion is what you opine ... just what you think in a very general way. It can be considered, it can be unconsidered. But as the word opinion is used - as in opinion-poll - it's just what people think without any real basis. It's almost an emotional conditioned reflex reaction.

Annie Fowler: I was wondering if it wasn't a tendency to try and classify other people because they feel safer if they know somebody's opinion about something ... so they ask for their opinion on something so they can classify them into a general scheme of opinions which would go with that opinion.

S: Well that is significant if one wants to know what their opinion is on certain matters of vital importance. If for instance, you're going to fight a battle well, it's useful to know if in people's opinions the battle was worth fighting, because if their opinion is that it isn't, well

you can't count on their support. But very often people's opinions aren't even of that kind. They're way beyond any possibility of any kind of verification. (Pause) ...

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Vajrasuri: Very often they offer their opinion as though it's some form of truth and they wish you to agree with them and if you disagree, well, that means you're not in contact with it.

S: In India people have got all sorts of philosophical opinions. If you mix with Hindus, well, they'll offer you all sorts of opinions on Buddhism. They may never have read a single book on Buddhism, they know absolutely nothing whatever about it - that doesn't prevent them from having quite strong opinions about Buddhism. They'll tell you with confidence that Buddhism is a branch of Hinduism, that the Buddha WAS the Avatar of Vishnu, that his teaching is exactly the same as the teaching of Hinduism, that he did teach Anatma and not Anata. They'll tell you this with complete confidence. In many cases they haven't any knowledge of the subject whatever. They're not some sort of expert. I'm afraid one of the main culprits in this sphere, I'm sorry to say - I hope I'm not destroying your delusions - was Mahatma Gandhi, who seemed to have an opinion on every conceivable subject, whether it was health or politics or drainage or sanitation or economics or the money supply or religion or geography (Laughter) - he'd give his opinion on anything. I mean volume after volume of opinion - articles in his paper and things of that sort. There are people like that.

Linda: I notice it in very popular papers which I read a lot of (giggle) (Laughter over her words) If there's a major debacle like the Falkland crisis or Charles and Diana's wedding, or whatever, there is - you just get this kind of heterogeneous collection of celebrities and ask their opinion of just what they think about Michael Aspel thinks this and the person that designed Lady Diana's wedding dress thinks this about all sorts of completely apparently random subjects and writes down what they think and that's a newspaper article (Laughter and S: Grunting agreement)

S: Yes it seems if someone is famous, it doesn't matter what they're famous for, but their opinion on some topic totally related with their own sphere of activity is somehow of value - which is extraordinary, hmm?

Dhammadinna: I was wondering if a general sharing of opinions in that sort of superficial way has some connection with the fact that the lack of real communication between people in their own sphere, and maybe the feeling you can't really affect a situation in any real [192] way. Because to really give a considered opinion you have to know about something and then you share that experience and you work on whatever sphere you're in and perhaps that doesn't really happen very much in general society - they just throw out the news.

S: Mmm. But this is precisely what I personally feel - I don't give opinions because I - when I'm sort of invited to give opinions sometimes - because I feel not only have I no knowledge in that particular area but I'm not called upon to take any action in that particular area. But, if I was called upon to take any action, I would inform myself about the situation, then perhaps I would formulate an opinion about it. If I'm not called upon to take any action, I don't feel called upon - I don't feel there's any real need to me to formulate an opinion, hmm? If someone says, well, "What do you think would be the best way of feeding 10,000 starving peasants in Central China?" I haven't a clue ... but some people would confidently give their opinion, I don't feel called upon to do that because I'm not in a position of being able to take

any sort of action so it would be a waste of mental energy, hmm? But if someone says to me do you think such and such Order member would be better to go to India to help Lokamitra or such and such, well, I can have an opinion as this is a situation in which I can have some influence, and in which I can inform myself before I take any decision in giving an opinion.

Dhammadinna: Having a considered opinion does imply you put some effort into the whole subject and not do that means you are being lazy.

S: I would say just to have opinions is a confession of impotence ...

Vajrasuri: Ah! You come up with some good things!

S: Yes. Well let me repeat it (Laughter) - To have opinions is a confession of impotence - you're not in a position to do anything ... so you can therefore afford to be irresponsible and say whatever just comes into your head and that is counted as your opinion.

Rosie O: I've just been thinking of hot-air balloons.

S: So one shouldn't have opinions, one shouldn't encourage oneself to have opinions or encourage other people. You should INVITE their [193] opinions.

Marion: Do you think mostly what we think we know are in fact opinions?

S: A lot I'm sure. Much more than people would care to admit. I mean supposing I was to say to some of you "Well, what's your opinion of the Abhidharma?" (Loud laughter) That's the sort of question that a journalist might ask you. (laughter) "... have you heard of the Abhidharma?" How could you possibly have an opinion about the Abhidharma, assuming of course you haven't studied it very much (laughter) ..."What is your opinion about the latest discoveries in nuclear physics?" How can you possibly know? At best you can say, I suppose the discovery is a good thing and leave it at that.

Linda: It's hard not to respond in terms of the question, though.

S: Especially when the assumption, is a flattering assumption ... (laughter) ... your opinion, your words of wisdom are worth publishing, worth hearing, worth writing down.. it's very flattering. (laughter) Then there's the sort of 'populist' approach - the man in the street's opinions are worth hearing, are worth having on any conceivable topic.

Anjali: There's also a general view that you should be concerned about everything. (General murmurs of assent and recognition)

S: That is a responsibility - that is a task for God alone. You not God. (Loud laughter) Don't feel called upon to be concerned about everything ... (Laughter) It's even beyond God. If there was a God, he'd have a real headache (laughter) I wouldn't really be concerned about everything - it is absolutely impossible. It's difficult to be concerned about everything that happens in the FWBO. How is it possible to keep track of all these things. So how can you be meaningfully concerned? Hmm? It's difficult enough to know sometimes what all the members of one's own family are doing - even nuclear family - you know, what your children are up to. (laughter)

Voice: Or to know yourself a lot of times. (laughter)

S: I think we must really beware of words which sound very well but which really have negative meanings.

Rosie A: Do you think it might stem from the organization of society [194] into so-called 'democracies' where you know, the actual opinion of a person is supposed to have worth?

S: When you exercise your vote, what is it you're really supposed to be doing? You're supposed to be choosing in a responsible manner between the policies of the various parties contesting the election. That assumes that you must have at least, that you've at least studied the manifestos, at least have studied their track record, at least have studied if not gone through carefully the legislation that they've passed when they were previously in power and read some of the speeches of their more prominent representatives and also have some independent knowledge of the subjects which they were talking about. That you know about the economy and that you know what is meant by monetarism for instance and all the rest of it. Hmm? To vote implies an informed choice. Is that what the average voter does?

Can that be expected of the average voter? It's a question of; there's two tribes, you know, and the other tribe has been stealing your cattle. "All right, shall we go and kill them chaps all right hands up those in favour" ... (laughter) Well, it's a clear and straight-forward issue, yeah? But in the modern world it isn't like that. I'm not saying that I'm against democracy or parliamentary democracy. Maybe it is nonetheless the best system that we have but perhaps it doesn't really quite work in the rational way that people seem to think, hmm?

Rosie O: Do you vote, Bhante?

S: No, I haven't done so yet, since coming back to this country. I would like to do so but having scrutinised the programs and manifestos of the different parties involved, I found myself in virtually total disagreement with all of them (laughter) I couldn't honestly vote for any of them, I couldn't vote for any of the parties, even just in order to keep the other party out (Laughter). I would like to vote and I think a responsible citizen should exercise his vote. I haven't yet found the party - because that's what it amounts to - that I could vote for.

Rosie Ong: Do you think that some day, some of us should become politicians?

S: Well, if you could become (laughter) with out sacrificing your Buddhist principles, I should be delighted. But it's a big IF [195] I'm afraid, under the present party political system. If you know, fate or God or whatever was suddenly to make you a dictator, hmm? just put you there, and gave complete power in your end, then that might be all right. But if you have to work your way up there, through the party political system, well you'd be such a grubby creature by the time you arrived, probably, there wouldn't be much of Buddhism left I think. You probably wouldn't be able to do very much of any good. I don't want to be too cynical about politics or politicians - I think sometimes people are. It's not so much even a question of people's dishonesty, or anything like that. It's the sheer complexity of modern life. Even the experts don't know, sometimes, as you see in the sphere of economics. Even the experts don't know whether there's a right way or a wrong way of doing things, huh? Experts can differ, they can disagree in all spheres. So what is the layman, so to speak, to make of it? How is he to exercise a choice? Anyway, people just follow their feelings, and their sort of cultural and

class conditioning. (pause)

I think the only issues on which one can have some sort of conviction, some sort of informed convictions, are quite local ones. You know, if it's a question of voting someone on to the local council. You know, you want to have a major road stopped from being put through your village, or that kind of ... out to stop it and another one isn't out to stop it. Well, you know it's quite clear which one you're going to vote for ... which is clear cut. But when it comes to national politics, it's not as clear-cut as that by any means. Each party has got a sort of bag of policies - sometimes it's a very mixed bag - you may like some items, you may not like other items. You may like to vote for one particular policy and not for another policy and each party has got a very mixed bag - sometimes it seems to be the same bag only with different labels, hmm? (laughter) So anyway you don't have a real choice.

Dhammadinna: It does give you a feeling of - not playing it personally in terms of what you do with your own life, but the circumstances that go on around. I mean we're fighting a war with Argentina but it's not really ...

S: It's not a war, it's not a war. (laughter) They're just fighting but it's not a war (laughter).

Dhammadinna: But that might ... (Laughter continues obscuring voice)

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S: Yes, indeed, you might have a brother involved.

Dhammadinna: That might effect us more personally in some way that we can't yet foresee. Yet it's not really been anything to do with our choice, how we deal with it.

S: Only very, very indirectly in as much as our representatives are in Parliament and are reasonably satisfied with what is going on, the majority of them or the majority of the majority.

Anjali: Why do you say it's not a war, Bhante?

S: War hasn't been declared. It is technically, apparently not a war. Though there's a certain amount of disagreement about that, even among international lawyers, but it is not, technically, a war, yet! No one has declared war, certainly, on both sides, save that there is no war, though fighting is going on, or has been going on. I mean I personally think we're getting off the track, but never mind.

The citizen, for want of a better term - I mean, should play his part in the activities of the group, that is to say, should take part in politics. But that becomes increasingly difficult, it seems in modern times, for someone with any kind of ethical and spiritual principle. I mean, especially where there's the system of Party politics. Politics is about power. You can stand as an independent, but what power does an independent have, even if he gets elected? Unless of course, the major parties are evenly balanced, and your vote can tip the balance but that is very, very unlikely. So even if you get to run as an independent, you virtually condemn yourself to impotence. You can exercise influence only through a party. But very often in order to get a position in that party, sufficiently powerful to exercise influence within it, you actually have to give up quite a lot of your principles.

Jenny: Perhaps we could support things like Nuclear disarmament then?

S: Well, yes, we could certainly support good causes but one has to again take a very wide view. Nuclear disarmament sounds a very good thing, and of course it is a very good thing, but then the point would be; all right, suppose you support unilateral nuclear disarmament, would that in fact result in the achievement of the goal that you want to achieve? I mean, people who believe in the abolition of nuclear weapons disagree among themselves about whether [197] multilateral nuclear disarmament is a good thing in the sense of conducing to that end or not! So you're left vaguely demonstrating in favour of something very, very general rather than a specific policy whereas if you demonstrate in favour or support of a specific policy, you must have a very, very sure understanding of the situation so that you can be quite confident that that policy as a policy is going to bring about the result that you desire, and not backfire in any way.

Marion: If you can't have an affect on things individually, what is the point, when it comes down to that, of what we're trying to do?

S: Well, I think you can affect things individually, but I think you are most sure of being able to affect things, if you make a start on or with the people you are actually in contact with, or the society which immediately surrounds you. Do you see what I mean? I think that is the only thing one can do at present, so far as I can see. I mean, not that that will necessarily always be the case, or be the case everywhere. For instance if you take the case of New Zealand, it's quite a small country, a small population, - I think that if for instance, the FWBO became very strong there, we could have a much more wide-spread effect, even on the country as a whole, even politically than would seem to be possible in Britain. I think that in New Zealand it could be done within a generation if you had sufficiently determined members of the Movement there. I think it could be done.

I don't see much happening in that sort of way within a generation here in Britain. I mean, if we're able to influence things on quite a wide scale among the ex-Untouchables in India, where there are tens of thousands and will very soon be hundreds of thousands of people involved with what we are doing. Then we will have to keep quite a low profile in case the government of India notices what's happening. Perhaps they're not bothered about us at present. But we are involved in something very big. So where we can influence things in a bigger way, we should certainly take advantage of our opportunities, only provided that we can really influence things, which means that we don't sacrifice our own principles. But apart from that, we have to work on a one-to-one basis, add people one-by-one as individuals. I'm not being pessimistic about achieving quite a lot in this way in the end because in the course of the last dozen or so years, well, I've seen things grow from nothing. In 1966, there was only me in London, not wanted by anyone in particular, completely penniless with nobody else around, but we've got a little bit more than that now. So it can be done. Well, things can grow. Anyway, we've got a bit far away, but never mind, at least you know more of my thinking perhaps on certain [198] topics. Well, this all came from "being opinionated". (laughter) So I'm very reluctant to have opinions, personally.

"And to suffer from the evil of the double veil (of conflicting emotions and primitive beliefs about reality)" We've gone through that, haven't we? I think we'd better not go on to a new topic because time is very nearly up. Maybe you'd just like to look back over what we've done this morning, and just see whether there is anything about which you are not completely clear.

Yes, maybe a few words about this question of the superiority of the Mahayana. I mean no doubt the Mahayana has a great depth to it, compared to the Hinayana, but I think one has to be a bit careful about how we use this word, 'superiority'; or how we think of one form of Buddhism being superior to another. It's after all mainly a question of practice. I have said, sometimes, that in the East, I sometimes found the Theravada Bhikkhus who technically were supposedly devoted to their own liberation, and not bothering about other people; actually they were quite concerned about other people in a way, that was quite Mahayanistic. And sometimes I found, for instance, Tibetan Buddhists who were supposedly on the Bodhisattva Path, who were very individualistic in their approach and not very concerned with other people. So it is very much a question of one's actual attitude or actual practice, rather than a matter of religious or spiritual labels.

Linda: Would it be like what we were saying a few days ago, about attaching values to words like "Maha" or "Hinayana" - "greater" or lesser", with greater as good, and lesser as bad?

S: Yes. Well, I don't really see much point in thinking in terms of separate sects or schools of Buddhism, because as I tried to make it clear in the "Survey", it is as though the major schools concentrate on different aspects of the spiritual life, even on different faculties, spiritual faculties.

So it's almost as though one shouldn't think in terms of following a particular school exclusively. That school has concentrated on specializing in that aspect of the spiritual path and you want to follow the spiritual path as such, and to do justice to all aspects of the spiritual path, which means all aspects of yourself, emotional, intellectual, volitional and so on. So that's why, or none of the reasons why, in the FWBO, we don't consider ourselves as belonging to any particular Buddhist tradition or any particular school of Buddhism or any particular sect. We accept the whole tradition; we take from that whatever is useful to us in our own development. We don't care, in a way, we don't mind at least, whether it comes from the Pali canon or the Tibetan scriptures or from a Mahayana sutra. We accept the [199] whole tradition, We find something helpful in all the different schools.

Rosie A: That's very helpful actually. I quite often get asked by people who want to know what school we follow.

S: Well, again they want to pin us down, they want to classify us when surely it's enough that we're just Buddhists. I mean, some people aren't even happy with that. They think that is too much of a label, but I think you need some sort of provisional label at least. But you don't have to say, well, I'm a Burmese, Vipassana, Theravada, Hinayana Buddhist. You don't need to be as specialized as that. If you do get inquiries about "What sort of Buddhist?", tell them, 'We're just Buddhists. We accept the whole Buddhist tradition'. I think it's better not to say we're Western Buddhists as though that's a special kind of sect. No, we're just Buddhists, functioning in the West, trying to follow the Path of Buddhism here in the West.

Annie F: I have talked with people who have accused our movement of putting sects down.

S: Well, we do, we do put them down as sects; we put sectarianism down.

Annie F: I've come in contact with people who said, "Oh, you're against the Hinayana", or whatever, and sometimes it's quite difficult to try to explain to them that it's not like that.

S: Well, we're against the exclusiveness of all the different schools or sects to the extent that they are exclusive. But we're not against the Theravada in the sense that we don't accept the Theravada scriptures. We do. We derive inspiration from those, but we also derive inspiration from the Mahayana or Tibetan scriptures, or Chinese Ch'an works. We derive inspiration from them all. They all come ultimately, however developed or elaborated they may be, they all derive ultimately from the teaching of the Buddha. I mean, not that everything, not that all the teachings are directly relevant to us at any given moment, no. We get more inspiration from certain teachings at one time, or more inspiration from certain teachings at another time, but we're open to being helped, we're open to being inspired by all the Buddhist scriptures.

We're open to being inspired by other works as well. Some people get a lot of inspiration from Keats or Shelley or Blake or whatever; [200] not that we would necessarily put them on the same level as the Buddhist scriptures, but they are also sources of inspiration. The trouble is, we are so broad that some people think that we are narrow. It's always like that, isn't it? I wonder what makes people think that we might be against the Theravada, for instance? Well, I suppose because we don't identify ourselves with it exclusively. It's as though if you don't identify with Theravada exclusively, well, you must be against it. You're either for it, completely exclusively, or against it. People think in that way. We're neither for it, in that way nor against it in that way.

Paula: People seem to get that impression if you're critical of Christianity, being sectarian.

Linda: Christ said "He who is not for me is against me" It's the truth (Laughter)

S: Well, if you don't accept Christ as the only begotten incarnate son of God, well, you're in a sense against Christianity, if disagreement means that you're against it. They take disagreement as repudiation or even enmity. But I think we have to be very unapologetic about our own approach to Buddhism. We are not against the Theravada, we are not against the Mahayana, we're not against any form of Buddhism, but are against sectarianism. We feel that sectarianism is not in accordance with the spirit of the Buddha's teaching. And even if we happen to find something which is good and helpful in the Bible itself, well, we're quite happy to acknowledge that, even if we did, we'd probably be looking at it, or interpreting it not in the Orthodox Christian way.

Voice: It seems to reflect our own unopinionatedness.

S: Yes. Buddhism is a tradition and unopinionated. In Christianity, the pattern seems to be the classic one: The Pope handing down his authoritative pronouncements on all sorts of topics. It's incredible. It reminds you of what someone said about (Macaulay): "I wish I was as confident of any one thing as (Macaulay) seems to be about everything!" (Laughter)

Dhammadinna: I discovered recently that the Papacy only became infallible recently - in 18?? - it had to do with a power struggle.

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S: The dogma of papal infallibility was promulgated only in 1871, but it was believed by many people before that. But when a dogma is proclaimed in that way it becomes obligatory upon Catholics to believe it. You cannot not believe it, you cannot refuse to believe it. If you do you can be excommunicated. That's the difference. I mean, in the same way, another

dogma recently proclaimed was that of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The dogma that the Virgin Mary on death was bodily assumed up into Heaven.

Dhammadinna: Previous to the dogma becoming infallible, could you choose not to, even though there was belief in it, you could not and you wouldn't be excommunicated?

S: Yes, oh, yes. The official Catholic position is that the Pope only defines dogma. He doesn't create it. The Catholic position would be that that particular belief was current in the Church from the very beginning but had not been defined precisely. So the Pope does not create the dogma, he finds the dogma already believed by faithful Catholics and believed right in the beginning and in a sense taught by Christ himself as the truth ... in the case of many dogmas so he defines it, that is he pronounces it. He gives it its proper form and says "This is now to be believed by all Catholics". I mean, to do the Popes justice, they don't very often define a dogma in this sort of way. So technically, many of their pronouncements are not infallible, but as someone said: "This air of infallibility surrounds everything they say and do". And ordinary Catholics don't distinguish what the Pope says 'ex-cathedra' by virtue of his infallibility and what he just says as Pope. They don't distinguish, or they can't distinguish, they don't think of distinguishing. Whatever the Pope says, goes! Whether it's technically infallible or not.

Dhammadinna: So the dogma is associated with the actual; that's because it's Christianity, whether things to do with Christ, God and Mary whereas more social pronouncements, say, on birth control nor marriage or whatever, they are a different level of ...

S: The Pope is authorized to pronounce infallibly upon faith and morals. Faith is the doctrine of dogma, morals is morals (Dhammadinna: Everything else!) (Laughter) ... so he pronounces upon things like contraception because that is a matter of morals. I don't think though that recent Popes have pronounced on such things as contraception by virtue of their infallibility. I don't think so, technically. But they [202] certainly have given many disciplinary rulings which are expected to be followed. (unclear) Anyway, how did we get on to that? Again 'opinionatedness'.

Rosie O: I'm not quite clear about what Gampopa means by the heading of this chapter: what he means by 'Motive'? Quite early on the 'motive' is 'Tathagatagarbha' but what does it mean?

S: What he basically means is that there is this potentiality for Enlightenment which is not just an abstract potentiality but an actual drive in the direction of Enlightenment and this is the basic theme of the Path itself. This is what he's concerned with. He's concerned with the spiritual path. So he begins with that sort of basic spiritual urge or motivation for following the path at all. All right, I think let's call it a day.

(End of Tape 8)

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S: I think we've come to the 'favourable conditions' for transferring from the unawakened to the awakened family, within the Mahayana spiritual family or the family of the followers of the Mahayana way of life. Would someone like to read that little paragraph?:

: "The favourable conditions are two. Outwardly, the teaching of the Noble Doctrine by others

and inwardly, proper mindfulness, aspiration for the good and wholesome and so on."

S: That's short and simple isn't it? "Favourable conditions are (only) two. Outwardly, the teaching of the Noble Doctrine by others." Noble doctrine of course, translates as Arya Dharma. Do you see any significance in that?

Rosie Ong: ... as taught by the Aryans.

S: Yes, who were the Aryans?

Rosie O: Those who realized the transcendental.

S: Perhaps not fully realized, but at least they were taken to Stream Entry, so it's the teaching of the Noble Doctrine, the Arya Dharma - not only the Dharma taught by Aryans, but the Dharma which pertains to the Aryan states, that is to say, transcendental states. In other words, not just, so to speak, psychological teaching but genuinely spiritual teachings; teachings leading to the transcendental, so "the teaching of the Noble Doctrine by others, inwardly, proper mindfulness, aspiration for the good and wholesome and so on," What does this remind one of? - a famous phrase or saying of the Buddha's on a very important occasion?

Dhammadinna: "Cease to do evil ..." (S: No, no.)

Voices: "With mindfulness strive on."

S: Yes, "with mindfulness strive on". You've got two things here, - there's the mindfulness and the aspiration or the putting thoughts of a better (tone), as when the Buddha says, "(Apamadena Sampadetha?)" with Mindfulness or Awareness, strive, make an effort,- so in the same way, "proper mindfulness, aspiration, for the good and wholesome and so on." It's simple really, isn't it? All that you need, first of all, is "the teaching of the Noble Doctrine by others," then "inwardly, proper [204] mindfulness", awareness continually sustained and then aspiration for the good and wholesome, and aspiration to evolve, to develop. Very very simple.

Vajrasuri: Not easy, though.

S: Well, Gampopa isn't saying so, is he? But at least, if you're clear as to what actually is involved, well, that in itself is a big step forward. If you can see what the essentials are, if you can see what you really have to do. (Pause) All right, let's go on to the distinctive marks. Would someone like to read it?

Kay (Ratnadakini): "The 'distinctive marks' are the signs which reveal the Bodhisattva family. As has been said in the Dasadharmaka Sutra:

The family of judicious Bodhisattvas
Is known by its signs
As fire by its smoke
And water by the ducks upon it."

S: This is quite simple, isn't it? The distinctive marks are the signs which reveal the Bodhisattva so that if you see those distinctive marks you know that the person possessing them is a Bodhisattva. The illustration is that it's like inferring the existence of fire from the presence of smoke or inferring the presence of water from the ducks that you see floating on something. It's just like that. You see those distinctive marks, whatever they are and you infer the presence of a Bodhisattva. So it's just a simple exercise in logic. So what are those signs, those distinctive marks?

Gay: "The signs are that body and speech, independent of the influence of a spiritual friend, are by nature gentle and mind is very little affected by fraud and deceit, while there is love for all beings and inner purity. Thus in the Dasadharmaka Sutra:

Gentle and not abusive,
Without deceit and fraud,
Full of love towards all beings
So is a Bodhisattva."

S: "The signs are that body and speech, independent of the influence of a spiritual friend, are by nature gentle". Now what do you think is the significance of that qualification? "Independent of the influence of a spiritual friend"?

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Voice: It's coming from within.

S: It's coming from within. It is part of your own nature. It's not just something you've picked up from a spiritual friend. What do you think is meant by 'gentle'? We haven't got the original Sanskrit or Tibetan word here. Just taking the English word at its face value, what does 'gentle' mean? What does being gentle in a spiritual sense mean?

Voice: You don't harm other beings.

S: You don't harm other beings.

Voice: Caring.

S: Caring. Probably implies a sensitivity, a sensitivity to feelings, reactions, needs of others but with gentleness is relative isn't it? It's like the nurse who's say, taking off the bandages of the patient and the nurse needs to be gentle to do it which means that she or he, needs to be sensitive to the amount of pain being experienced by the patient. So presumably sensitivity is also involved. But gentleness, doesn't of course, or the gentle nature doesn't suggest weakness. One can still be quite firm.

"And mind is very little affected by fraud and deceit." What do you think this means? As regards the Bodhisattva ideal?

Rosie A: Does it mean that he isn't taken in by fraud and deceit?

S: No. I think actually, it means that he himself is not under the influence of fraud and deceit. Is not himself fraudulent or deceitful.

Rosie A: I'm surprised because it says , "very little affected", rather than 'not at all'.

S: Well, he's only an aspiring Bodhisattva. (Laughter)

Dhammadinna: Yes, he must be very straightforward and clear by the time that comes.

Voices: The Bodhisattva vow.

S: It's the Bodhisattva vow. So any infringement of the precepts, any infringement of the perfections is seen as being untrue to your [206] vow and therefore, as cheating or defrauding living beings. So, therefore, presumably the text says that among the signs that reveal the Bodhisattva family "are by nature gentle and the mind is very little affected by fraud and deceit", while there is a love for all beings and inner purity. So the Bodhisattva, or one of the signs of a Bodhisattva is that he is straightforward with regard to sentient beings. He promises to help them and keeps his promise. He doesn't deceive them. He doesn't pretend to be a Bodhisattva. It actually is love for all beings and inner purity. What do you think is meant by 'inner purity'?

Voice: Is it purity from the defilements?

S: Purity from the defilements, yes, obviously purity of intent. So the verse says, "gentle and not abusive, without deceit and fraud, full of love towards all beings, so is a Bodhisattva".

So gentle and not abusive. Here, being abusive is contrasted with being gentle. "Without deceit and fraud and full of love towards all beings", which suggests a very extensive development of the Metta Bhavana, "so is a Bodhisattva". This is how you can recognize that someone is a Bodhisattva. This is how you can recognize that someone does belong to the followers of the Mahayana way or the family of the followers of the Mahayana way of life.

Marion: When it says, "without deceit and fraud", that's in the 'motive', the way of bringing that 'motive' into operation. If it's skilful, do you use deceit and fraud? (Laughter)

S: Well, what does one mean by skilful? I think one is treading perhaps, on quite dangerous ground, here. There is the classic instance: if someone was being pursued by people who want to take his life. Suppose you were asked "where has that man gone, which way?" and if you deceived them, well that is justifiable, but that's a sort of classic case. But I think it's quite dangerous to take it very much further than that. It's not really so clear cut. Can you really deceive people for their own good? Can you give a concrete instance?

Paula: We were talking about this in the study group, weren't we? Last Monday, but it wasn't the same kind of thing. It was Caroline talking about when in hospitals, if and when you tell people that they're dying and under what circumstances. She felt she would want to be honest with the patient but she could see that there might be reasons [207] why we deferred it all. There seemed to be complicated situations, where the direct truth ...

S: This is the justification, put forward recently, for trying out certain drugs on patients without their knowledge and consent. Also without the knowledge and consent of any of their relations because it was said that if they had been told that these new drugs were being tried out on the patient, then the anxiety which they might feel, because it wasn't known whether

the drug would help or not, would affect the success of the experiment. You see? So that's why I say, you're treading on quite dangerous ground. It really depends upon how important one considers the individual and individual responsibility. It also, perhaps, depends upon what are your personal views about, let's say, life after death.

Marion: Yes, that's the point Caroline made.

S: And whether you consider it important to maintain consciousness during the period and through the process of dying. So the doctor may think that it's important to prolong your life for as many more minutes as possible, at all costs, even at the cost of deceiving you. You may be quite happy to accept a slightly shorter life provided you're told the truth. You're given time to face it and to prepare yourself to move on. But has the doctor the right to deprive you, so to speak, of that choice, of that freedom in a way, in accordance with his personal beliefs? I think, therefore, broadly under such circumstances, it would be better when someone enters hospital, ideally for them to be able to say to the doctor either "I want to know at every stage what is happening" or to say, "Well, look, I don't want to know, just treat me. I'm not going to ask any questions".

But I think that must be explicit. I think that must be the individual patient's choice. I think it's really dreadful for the patient to be left in doubt, suspecting that there's something they're not being told and not really knowing. Some people would really rather know the worst. At least that would set their mind at rest, so to speak, to know the worst. Then, what about the condition of a person who has been led or hasn't been told anything to the contrary, who has been led to suppose that they're not going to die and then they suddenly realize that they're dying and they've only got a few more minutes. That is really quite dreadful. I really trust you don't think that there is any justification morally and spiritually for not telling people the truth unless they have asked not to be told and have given you a completely free hand, [208] in which case they're presumably prepared all the time - they obviously don't care.

Rosie Anderson: Do you think that's always true, that there's no moral justification for not telling people the truth?

S: Give me another example and I'll think about it. (Chuckles) What about with children? Are you justified in deceiving your children for their own good? Trouble is, they find you out very quickly. (Laughter) They always know when mummy's lying, they can tell. (Laughter) What about the little social lies? "Oh, I'm so sorry I won't be home tomorrow evening." (Laughter) What about those little lies? Are they really lies? I suppose technically they're probably little face saving devices, so you don't have to say to somebody, "I don't want to see you". He understands you don't want to see him. Maybe it's a bit considerate not to say so? Perhaps? Or is it better not to have a completely open communication with him? Can you afford to do so? Do you see what I mean?

Vajrasuri: So often it's fear that brings in deceit, - you're frightened yourself of the truth even though you know the truth.

S: Mmm. Or suppose that you live under a totalitarian regime, would you perhaps be justified in concealing the truth of certain matters from the authorities? I think, perhaps, one has to make a distinction between deceiving individuals as such, and deceiving the representatives of authority? (Laughter) You see what I mean? Say, if you're being interrogated by the secret

police about the whereabouts, for instance, of friends of yours who've gone into hiding, would you be obliged not to deceive them morally?

Annie F: No! (Laughter)

S: Well, you might say, "even deceiving such people was unskilful, but it would be more unskilful not to. You have unfortunately found yourself in the position of having to choose between two unskilful actions. I'm being a bit tentative here but, perhaps, it's - one does have to distinguish between one's communication with another individual and one's communication, if it can be called that, with someone who represents the power of the group. But I make that distinction rather provisionally. I will have to think about it some more. But perhaps it could be made a distinction. But to go back to this example of the sick person, what's your own feeling? Would you rather [209] know the truth?

Voice: Yes.

S: Would everybody rather know the truth or anybody a bit doubtful, however bad it was, even if you were dying of cancer or something terrible like that, you'd rather know? (Chorus of yes's)

That seems more realistic that you should just know what the situation is.

Glynis: I have two neighbours at the moment, both of whom have sick relatives who are dying. Apparently they, none of them mentioned the fact or they pretend they're getting better all the time. I think it's going to be so much harder ...

S: Because a time will come when they know they're dying although they're not told. Also, another thing is, and this point has also been made, that if you pretend to people in those circumstances, it means there's no real communication between you; that if everybody's pretending then there is no one who is in real communication with the dying person. So that when, perhaps, they most need communication and real human contact, they're not getting it because you can't just be honest about everything else and just not honest about that. The dishonesty vitiates the entire relationship. This is what one finds with relationships in general, that if you're dishonest about one thing you can't sort of isolate that dishonesty especially if it's connected with something of some importance. It affects the whole relationship.

Kay: It's very difficult if the person that's dying is pretending they're not dying and won't, you know ... It can be the other way.

S: Ah well, that's their responsibility - that's their responsibility, that's their choice to keep up what they might regard as a brave front to the very end. Maybe because they've not been accustomed to taking anyone into their confidence; maybe they've not been accustomed to show what they would consider as weakness; maybe they've not been accustomed to seeming to ask for sympathy. They've always been taught, or they taught themselves, the right thing to do is to keep a stiff upper lip and say nothing about your troubles to anybody. Well, if that is their choice, you have to respect that even though you may think their choice [210] is mistaken. They are probably cutting themselves off, but then, perhaps, it's not surprising, if they've cut themselves off from other people all their lives. It's going to be difficult for them to change at the end of their lives.

Vajrapushpa: That's rather sad because they would have a last chance just before they die. (S: Yes, indeed) In a way it's an opportunity for ...

S: Sometimes it does happen; sometimes people do open up in those sort of circumstances, in other cases not, they persist to the bitter end.

Vajrapushpa: I think there's an opportunity for quite good communication just before you die, if you altered ...

Glynis: I don't know if anybody else has seen it - there was a programme on television recently of a woman who makes it her whole work going around talking to dying people and helping them to accept death. (Voice: Elizabeth Kubler-Ross), and she says that it's a huge relief for people, sometimes, to find somebody who actually has the courage themselves to talk about somebody else's death. She talks to children who are dying and things ...

S: You feel relief when at last you are able to talk about anything that had worried you for the a long time and which you haven't been able to talk about. It may be your state of health in general; it may be anything. If you had to keep it to yourself for a long time and if you were really worried about it, then it does come as a great relief to be able to talk to somebody about it and if you know or you suspect that you're dying, I believe that's going to be worry for a lot of people and it must be a relief to be able to talk about it with somebody, especially somebody who is sympathetic and who understands; not just a doctor to whom, as the little poem says, "Death is just a scientific fact". That was Oscar Wilde - "The Ballad of Reading Jail". The doctor said that "Death was but a scientific fact, the chaplain called everyday and left a little tract". (Laughter) That also happened, you see. Even the priest doesn't dare to talk about death. He calls and he leaves a little tract and then he goes away. Even the priest is afraid, apparently. I mean, not always perhaps, but very often, to talk about death. You're told not to be morbid, you know. Think quite cheerful thoughts; look on the bright side of things (Laughter)

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"Of course, you're going to get better" and that can be really dreadful. It's almost saying, "I don't want to talk to you. I don't want to communicate with you. I can't be bothered. I don't want the responsibility. I don't want the trouble of sharing your anxiety".

Rosie Ong: This reminds me of the ethics in the Co-ops where you don't pay tax because you can't afford it and social security. It's always a bit worrying that sometimes like when it has happened.

S: Worrying in what sense, what is one worried about?

Rosie O: Something in the ethicality about it, even though it's an authority that one's dealing with. When one should be paying tax, for example, and one's not paying tax, then it is worrying.

S: I've said that one should not do anything illegal, that's quite clear first. I discourage people from doing anything illegal. Quite apart from other considerations, you can get into trouble. (Laughter) I've been coming down a bit on one or two people about that sort of thing. One shouldn't make a false declaration.

Rosie O: Sometimes you can arrange it so it's legal, yes?

S: Well, if it's legal, it's legal. (Laughter) And if you feel that legality is sufficient, well, that's all right, but you may wish to look deeper than that. You may wish to adopt a genuinely ethical position instead of one that is simply legal. It is quite a fine point, yes? Because there are so many things that one can do which are legal though which are not, perhaps, strictly ethical. So you should make a clear distinction. Are you simply aiming to satisfy the law or are you trying to discover what is the ethic or the principle involved and be faithful to that. Sometimes there is no ethical consideration. Sometimes it's just a legal matter, a matter of legal formality. There's nothing of an ethical nature to bother about. You comply with the law and that's that so far as the law is concerned. Sometimes you have to weigh one thing against another and to comply with such legal requirements in the interest of something else that you want to do. For instance, if you want to travel from one country to another you need a passport. So when you apply for and receive a passport, what does that imply? You accept the principle of nationality and you regard yourself, at least for legal purposes, as belonging to a particular nationality. Well, supposing you don't happen to believe that. I personally don't believe [212] this; don't believe in nationalism. Nationalism is a curse. But, nonetheless, if I want to go to India I have to have a passport. So to some extent that represents a compromise. I'm not doing anything illegal. If I tried to enter India without a passport, that would be illegal. I probably wouldn't succeed. So in order to enter India and to carry on with my Buddhist work there, I have to provide myself with a passport which means that in a sense, yes, I am going along with this principle of nationality, of separate independent sovereign states which I don't really believe in. It isn't always easy. Sometimes one has to make a choice of that sort. I could, of course, say that I'm not going to apply for a passport. That means I limit myself to Britain. They can prevent me leaving by force without a passport. So if I don't equip myself with a passport, it doesn't mean I'm free from nationality. I'm trapped within that system in which I don't believe.

Rosie O: Do you think we should pay tax if we can help not paying it? (Laughter)

S: Well, this depends on your attitude to the existing social system. I can understand someone not wishing to pay tax because they believe that the existing system is thoroughly iniquitous. But then they must be consistent and not support it in other ways. (Laughter) I think, sometimes, one has to make a limited protest as one does, for instance, when one becomes, say, a 'conscientious objector' and refuses to fight. Sometimes one has to draw the line in that sort of way.

Rosie O: So you're saying that you think that we don't owe any moral obligation to any authority?

S: Oh yes, I think we do, but not an absolute one because after all we are members of a society. We do benefit from society in many ways. So it may be that we disagree with certain aspects of the society in which we live, but, presumably, we don't disagree with all aspects. We accept the protection of the police, for instance. But if one felt that the system under which one was living was on the whole harmful rather than helpful, that would require quite a lot of thought. All right, one would perhaps, be justified in withdrawing one's support from that system, from that society. But there might be limits to the extent to which you could even practically withdraw your support. Would you not, for instance, ride on its railways, if they were nationalised? What about its electricity and its water and its sewerage system? [213]

Perhaps you would be a bit of a fraud if you continued to use those things. Or you might say, as the proverb says, "All is fair in love and war", (Laughter) and that you would exploit the system and do as little for it as you could. I think that is probably rather a dangerous attitude to adopt; dangerous for you psychologically because you could end up with you just exploiting other people, and taking from other people wherever you could, and giving nothing in return.

Rosie O: It would be deceitful in itself as well.

S: It would be deceitful in itself. I think, unfortunately, deceitfulness even, so to speak, in a good cause, does have a very negative effect on the person concerned. It never has a good effect, it never has a positive effect.

Voice: So the Dharma almost needs a free society.

S: Yes, yes indeed. This is what I think. That quite apart from trying to create a new society, we probably have to give our support to those positive institutions in society that is to say, the larger society to which we belong, which at least make it possible for us to practise Buddhism. When in some states, we know, we ought to be aware we could not practice Buddhism. We might be permitted to do a little meditation behind closed doors but not much more than that. We would not be permitted to have any public activities. I think we should be very well aware of that fact and give our support to those systems of government which permit us at least to exist and not to those systems which would not permit us to exist. There must be some good at least, in a system under which we can exist and propagate our beliefs and extend our activities and our interests. There are many parts of the world in which it would not be possible to do that, perhaps notably the Communist countries, the Muslim states, perhaps some parts of the Catholic world still.

Dhammadinna: It's quite a big proportion of the planet actually, isn't it? If you think about it ... (Voices: Yes)

S: Yes. It's really only under the democracies that we can function freely. So I think we would be very unwise to knock democracy too much. It may not be a perfect system, it certainly isn't a perfect system - but it at least permits people like us to try and to put it [214] right. (Laughter) Well at least to improve it in certain small ways which is all that we're able to do for the present. I don't think that you could say that all political systems are equally bad. I think that is just foolishness. It's just closing one's eyes to the facts. Some are better than others from our point of view, anyway. We can function freely in Britain and we can function freely in the States as far as I know and I think, any of the Western Democracies. We can function freely in India.

Jenny: Why did you say, then the other day that we had to keep a low profile?

S: Ah, in as much as some of us are foreigners and they are a bit suspicious about the activities of foreigners. But that obviously doesn't apply to our Indian members. Christian missionaries have made them suspicious of foreigners. (Laughter)

Rosie O: So this doctrine of skilful means, is it highly (unethical)?

S: Well, I'm afraid in some instances some traditional Buddhist literature seems to give the impression that telling lies is justified if it helps spread the Dharma, but I don't really think it's as simple as that. I think you'd have to be a really great Bodhisattva to tell a really big lie. (Laughter) I think one's aim should always be to be as honest as you possibly can. Sometimes complete honesty is not possible because of the very nature of the medium of communication. You can't always say everything that you think to people. Even if you don't want to say, you can't say. You can say the words but they will take the words in the wrong way. That means that you haven't communicated. Do you see what I mean? Yeah?

Greta: Isn't there the Buddhist parable of the Burning House, isn't that ...

S: Well, how does that apply, what you say?

Greta: Well, he got the children out of the house by saying he was going to offer them one thing and then offered them something else and that obviously is not deceit in a Buddhist sense. It's skilful means.

S: Well, it's significant perhaps, that the Buddha in the Sutra feels it necessary to explain that it wasn't actually telling a lie. (Laughter) [215] Perhaps we can't press the point too much when it's a parable.

Greta: Sometimes it's necessary to explain things in a certain way that people will respond to, which isn't exactly true.

S: It's not only a question of say, choosing to say something in a way that they will respond to and not saying it in another way that they won't respond to. It's not really quite like that. They cannot understand any other way, you see? Let's take the example of a Centre, an FWBO Centre, and you want to get a friend of yours to go along to it. Now you know very well that the main purpose of the Centre is spiritual ultimately, in the sense of the transcendental, but you know that if you use the word 'transcendental' to your friend it will put them off. Why? Because they can't understand what transcendental means. You cannot communicate the fact of the transcendental. They must take it in some other way. So it is not a question of your, say, using psychological terminology and deceiving your friend by not telling him about the transcendental significance of the Centre. That is not open to you to do that anyway, - do you see what I mean? So you say as much as you possibly can.

Greta: Or they might have an idea of Buddhism or the transcendental which is completely wrong.

S: Yes, so you would be communicating. Therefore, by not speaking of the transcendental, not speaking of Buddhism, you would not be suppressing something, because for it to be possible for you to suppress something there would have to be the possibility of your communicating something. But that possibility is not there. So it was a bit like that, I think, in the case of the Buddha, or the old man rather, and what he promised those children in order to get them out of the burning house. Do you see the point of the distinction? (Sounds of Agreement) It is not that you deliberately suppress something. You've no choice because in the circumstances it is not possible for you to communicate that anyway.

Paula: And also with more sort of mundane matters, if I'm trying to get someone to come to

the Centre who's married and got children and they don't want me talking about communities. They'll react straightaway. You sort of talk about what ...

S: Well, the Centre is a complex thing with a lot of activity and you [216] talk about those which you think will interest the person that you're talking to, knowing that sooner or later if they do get involved, they'll come to know about all those other things and see them in a proper perspective anyway. (End of Side A)

... that the Centre will be absolutely swarming with mothers and babies. (Laughter) (Pause)

Perhaps one has to draw a distinction between honesty and communicating the whole truth. Sometimes it's not possible for you to communicate the whole truth; not possible for you even to try because the words, which for you communicate that particular truth, for the person to whom you are speaking would have an entirely different meaning. For instance, supposing for somebody who know you, meditation meant auto-hypnosis. So it would be useless your telling that person that, "I meditate every day", because he doesn't understand meditation in the way that you understand it. If you were to tell that person that you meditate everyday, you would in fact be saying to him that you engaged in auto-hypnosis every day. Do you see what I mean?

So the possibility of really telling that person what you do every day hardly exists because the habits are firmly in their mind that the word 'meditation' refers to auto-hypnosis and that people who engage in meditation are just hypnotizing themselves. So one has to be quite careful when talking to people that you're using words in the same sense that they're using them, that you're not speaking at cross purposes. I think in certain instances we're very much aware of this for instance of the word 'Buddhism' means something different to people outside the Friends, something different from what it means to people inside the Friends.

So one can certainly refrain from deceiving people and defrauding them. For actually to speak the whole truth as you know it or as you see it or as you experience it, that's very difficult indeed.

Gay: Takes a lot of skill actually to know just how much to communicate to people. (Long Pause)

S: Would someone like to read the next paragraph and verse?

Vajrasuri: "In other words, from time out of mind a Bodhisattva, in whatever he undertakes, acts out of compassion for all sentient beings, is devoted to the Mahayana, endures unheard of hardships and practises the tenets of the good and wholesome which are the very nature of the Perfections. In the Mahayana Sutra Lankara it is written:

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From the very beginning to apply oneself to one's work with compassion, devoted interest and patient endurance,
And accomplish good - these virtues are known as the distinctive marks of this family."

S: "In other words, from time out of mind a Bodhisattva in whatever he undertakes, acts out of compassion for all sentient beings".

What do you think is meant by 'time out of mind'? What does it refer to?

Voice: Transcendental

S: No, not quite.

Marion: Time that you can't think about.

S: Yes, "from time out of mind", in other words, from a very long time. In other words it suggests that the Bodhisattva is following a Bodhisattva path, life after life, hundreds of lives, thousands of lives in other words, from time out of mind - he doesn't give up - he keeps up the effort throughout all those lives. So "from time out of mind, the Bodhisattva, in whatever he undertakes, acts out of compassion for all sentient beings" This suggests that he's constantly aware of the sufferings of sentient beings and he's doing whatever he can to relieve them. There is a quite famous passage in one of the Mahayana Sutras quoted by Santideva in the (??) where the Buddha is represented as saying the Bodhisattvas should not be taught too many things. If he is taught compassion then that is quite enough. As if to say for the Mahayana, compassion sums up everything. Though it isn't quite compassion in the sense of the Karuna Bhavana, the second of the Brahma-Viharas. It goes quite a bit beyond that. What one might call the metaphysical or even the more transcendental dimension is stressed much more. This is why it's sometimes called the Maha Karuna, the great compassion - not great simply because it embraces an infinite number of human beings, though it does that also, but because it's the product, so to speak, of the sort of metaphysical or transcendental insight. That is to say, insight into the void, insight into the true nature of existence. So Maha Karuna it is said, is co-ordinate with Mahaprajna, great wisdom. There is in fact no Maha-Karuna without Maha-Prajna just as there's no Maha-Prajna really without Maha-Karuna. It's not that the Bodhisattva is a rather sentimental type of person. It's not that at all. It's not that the Bodhisattva is of a different kind of temperament, there's not a special [218] Bodhisattva temperament. The Bodhisattva's compassion is of quite a different order. It's the product so to speak, of a metaphysical and transcendental realization.

Rosie: Could you say something about the distinction between sentiment and compassion?

S: Sentiment and compassion in the sense of sentiment and Great Compassion? (Rosie: Or just compassion.)

Well, what is sentiment? What is sentimentality? That might make it easier to understand. What do we mean by sentimentality? We can be sentimental over little doggies, pussycats and things like that (Laughter) Is that compassion? What is sentimentality?

Rosie A: A sort of over-emotionality.

S: But why is it over emotional?

Marion: Because the object doesn't actually merit that kind of ...

S: Well, why not? (Laughter) You can be just as compassionate to a dog as to a human being. Is that not the characteristic of the Bodhisattva? He's compassionate to all sentient beings. Why should he discriminate against dogs and cats, reptiles, spiders and toads - they are just as

good as you are. (Laughter) Though you didn't mean that, did you?

Marion: No, I didn't. I have to go away and think about it.

Rosie O: What you meant was indulgence, wasn't it?

S: Ah, yes, it's a sort of indulgence, that is the key I think. That you're not really feeling compassion, you're over-conscious of yourself as feeling compassion and you're indulging in that feeling. You're sort of enjoying the feeling of feeling compassion. This is what sentimentalism is.

Dhammadinna: I can feel that, even seeing a news broadcast and seeing a lot of suffering and yet I suspect what I've been feeling is sentimentality rather than compassion.

S: Because compassion would really want to do something. But when [219] we're sentimental, we're just, so to speak, enjoying our own sentiments, our own emotions for their own sake without any real reference to the supposed objects of those emotions. As when you say, for instance, of a young girl, "Oh, she's in love with love". The wretched object of her affections is insignificant; she's just sort of indulging or revelling even in this sensation of love that she's feeling and that can sometimes lead you to be callous with regard to the supposed object of those feelings. Do you see what I mean? This is sentimentality. So that is clearly quite distinct from compassion. So sentiment in this sense would be well, you're feeling very sorry - "Oh, isn't it terrible what's happening to those poor people in that country!" You sort of go on and on about it and you quite enjoy the feeling of feeling sorry for them. But you don't do anything about it. So that's the distinction between sentiment and compassion. If it's real compassion, you would not only feel but you'll be moved to do something. Or if you couldn't, you just wouldn't waste emotional energy feeling in that sort of way. There's a lot of sentimentality that masquerades as compassion and so on.

Rosie O: Sometimes you feel some pseudo-compassion as well. For instance when an older person walks by, you sort of feel sorry, not for that person, but for what you think he might be.

S: This is more like pity. This is vicarious. You're really feeling sorry for yourself. You're seeing yourself as perhaps being in that old person's shoes one day and you're not really feeling sorry for them. You're feeling sorry for yourself because you might be like that one day. So again that is something different from genuine compassion.

Marion: Compassion is really more outward going, isn't it?

S: Well, more genuinely outward going - you're really concerned with sentient beings.

Marion: When it's appropriate to the object.

S: Yes, when it's fully appropriate to the object. We won't go at this point into the question of to what extent the object also is void - that carries us into another dimension that we're not really concerned with now (Laughter).

Anjali: So you're saying that vicarious compassion is akin to pity?

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S: I would not use the word 'compassion' here. I would say that what we usually think of as pity is a vicarious emotion, whereas compassion in the true sense of Karuna doesn't have any element of vicariousness in it.

: So you have to be very strong to feel real compassion?

S: Yes, indeed. Well, for real compassion in the Bodhisattva sense, there must be an element at least of wisdom and you don't develop wisdom without having developed the other Paramitas too.

Marion: Can you say more on the difference between transcendental wisdom and mundane wisdom?

S: Well, one can say that transcendental wisdom contains an element of direct insight.

Marion: Is it possible to relate on a more practical level?

S: Well, if one has that direct insight it does modify one's character; it does modify one's attitude. In fact it transforms one eventually. So that if you have real insight you behave in a very different way from what you did before. For instance, you won't be selfish; you won't be greedy, not because you're controlling yourself but because the base of those things, which is the ego itself, has been dissolved. You may seem to have an ego because you're functioning apparently like everybody else, but it's not a real ego - it's an apparent ego. There's a comparison given in the (??) philosophy for this. It's like the difference between an actual rope and a rope which has been burned to ashes but actually still looks like a rope, at least from a distance, but it can't actually bind anything. It's often like that. When you've developed insight, you're incapable of reacting, whereas before, there was always the possibility, even when you kept yourself under control, the possibility of reacting was there. But once you've developed insight, well, it doesn't happen. There's nothing to react against there's no one to react. So sooner or later other people start noticing.

Annie F: Is transcendental wisdom the same as insight?

S: Yes and no. Insight is a term which appears much more within the Hinayana context and it's in the Mahayana context that you get the expression 'transcendental wisdom', i.e. Prajnaparamita - the wisdom that [221] goes beyond. So, "in other words, from time out of mind, a Bodhisattva in whatever he undertakes acts out of compassion for all sentient beings, is devoted to the Mahayana". How does one understand that? "Devoted to the Mahayana"? Does it necessarily mean devoted to any particular school of Buddhism?

Debbie S: Wouldn't that mean devoted to the Bodhisattva ideal?

S: It really means, devoted to the Bodhisattva Ideal, devoted to the Bodhisattva path. That is the Mahayana. He not only practices it himself, not only follows it himself but encourages others to do so.

And also, "endures unheard of hardships". It sounds rather demanding, doesn't it? The Bodhisattva's life is not an easy one, at least it doesn't look easy to people observing him. He

may not himself experience it as difficult but it certainly looks difficult to other people. To other people it seems as though he's enduring unheard of hardships. You need a great deal of Virya to be able to do that. What do you think about this question of hardships; enduring hardships?

Linda: To the Bodhisattva it's not hardship, though, because he enjoys it, doesn't he? His ...

S: Well, in the case of a real Bodhisattva, but what about other people? What should be your attitude towards hardships? Should we avoid them?

Marion: You should avoid hardships that are going to destroy you but not the ones that are going to move you on.

S: Well, if it destroys you, one might say it isn't a hardship, it's just something that destroys you. (Laughter) Hardship just toughens you up. (Laughter)

Marion: What's destructive for you can be hardship for other people.

S: Right. What is hardship for one is destructive for another. What is destructive for one is hardship for another. You have to estimate your own strength. Do you not think we sometimes underestimate our own strength?

Marion: Yes.

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Vajrapushpa: I think people can usually do more than they think they can. Maybe people suddenly think, "Oh, this is really hard, I can't do this", and then they decide they can't and they can start thinking about that they can't do it ...

S: I think in anyone the emphasis should not be on enduring hardships. That is not one's criterion, one criterion is that of fulfilling the ideal and being prepared in the course of that to endure hardships if necessary. But only too often one has a very sort of dim vision of the ideal and you're not really prepared to put up with very much in the way of hardships nor to realize it. A little discomfort discourages you, not to speak of real genuine hardship. Like when people say, "I don't think I'll meditate today, I've got a bit of a headache." (Laughter)

: I got involved with fairy tales when I got back and I was very inspired by the way the heroes in fairy tales have to fight the dragon seven days and seven nights without stopping. (Laughter)

: I read a book recently about women in Japanese P.O.W. camps. It really seemed to transform a lot of women into heroines not all but a lot!

S: Maybe we should have our own FWBO camps. (Loud Laughter)

: We have. It's called Pure Land Co-op.

S: Maybe it can be called another ... (Laughter)

Rosie O: It's quite a nice thing to know that women survive much better than men.

S: Ah yes. (Much laughter) Why do you think that was?

: They were more supportive of each other. They formed into family groups, looked after the weaker ones. The men tended to be much more inside themselves and also their pride (S: Stiff upper lip), yes, their pride had taken a terrific blow, just being in a P.O.W. camp.

S: Yes, because they were soldiers and they had been defeated. So maybe men need Prisoner of War camps too. (Laughter) But that's true, that difficulties really do bring out something in you that more easy circumstances don't. I've really seen that with some of our friends [223] working in India. Which is, in some ways, like being in a P.O.W. camp, in the sense that conditions are very, very difficult, but they're really responding very, very well in most cases.

Megha: It's important to focus on not doing it or rather, not to take on hardships for the sake of taking on hardships.

S: Yes. It's not in a sort of weight-lifting kind of spirit: "Give me a hardship, I can endure it!". (Laughter) But being willing to undergo the hardships if that is necessary to realize the ideal. If you can realize the ideal comfortably, well, why not! I mean no one wants unnecessary hardship, but it does seem that a certain amount of hardship does bring out something in you ...

Debbie: (Interrupting) ... ascetic practises?

S: In a way, but I think asceticism is something very different; the word itself 'ascetic' comes from a Greek word meaning something like 'training'. You put yourself into training, that's what it really means. Training is difficult, training stretches you, but the idea is not to mortify yourself but to stretch yourself or that was the classical Greek idea. Anyway, asceticism meant training and they made that comparison explicitly. Training for the good life just as you trained to run a race. You needed to reduce any superfluous fat; get rid of all that flab, morally speaking.

Marion: The idea of the suffering artist's gone a bit wrong, too.

S: The suffering artist?

Marion: In a way a lot of artists think they suffer in a way that creates their creativity.

S: Sometimes it can happen, but sometimes too much suffering can crush you.

Marion: You get to enjoy it.

S: In a sense, some great artists seem not to have created out of suffering at all, but seemed to have created out of joy, like Blake. Blake died singing songs. Some people might have said he had a very hard life - he often starved, well, he not only starved, he had no money. [224] His wife had to put an empty plate in front of him to remind him that there was no money to go and buy food with. So he'd very quickly do a bit of etching and go off and sell it and come back and give his wife the money. That is how they lived. (Laughter) But he remained happy

and joyful and so apparently did she. So there was no question of him creating out of suffering so far as he was concerned.

Jenny: The other side of it is that you do see people give themselves a very hard time and their health suffers. I've seen in the Friends ...

S: Well, why do people give themselves a hard time as distinct from enduring hardships, when hardships are necessary for the realization of a certain ideal? I think it must be a remnant of Christian thinking that if it hurts it must be doing you good, so therefore, hurting does you good. That is, in hurting is itself progress towards the ideal, which is very doubtful. I think it's an expression of a lack of understanding what the Buddhist would see as the need for a happy and healthy and human base for the spiritual life.

It seems that very often from the traditional Christian point of view, if you're sick or maimed in some way then you're more spiritual you're nearer God. You identify more with Christ because Christ after all was crucified so if you are suffering a lot you identify yourself with Christ. (Light laughter) Well, this is very often the attitude, isn't it? That those who are sick, those who are deprived, and those who are suffering, they are nearer to God, nearer to Christ. They are undergoing their own personal crucifixion. Sometimes this very language is used. But this is not the Buddhist point of view. Yes, you can develop insight in that sort of situation, according to Buddhism, but you can also develop it in a situation of joy. Perhaps you're more likely to develop it in a situation of joy.

: The Sunday school I used to go to used to talk about "taking up your cross"

S: Christians very often take up their cross and hit somebody else with it. (Much laughter) Give you a good kick with their crucifix.

Rosie O: It's often said that unless you can experience suffering, great suffering, you can't really experience the other pole - that is happiness.

S: Well, it is true that in terms say, of physical sensation, the [225] same nerves that enable you to experience pleasure also enable you to experience pain. So if you're open to the one, you're open to the other. This is very true but I don't think on the purely emotional level you have to experience emotional suffering in order to be able to experience emotional joy. I don't think this is necessary. Certainly, that's the Buddhist view. That the further you go up in the scale of consciousness, the more of joy there is and the less of suffering.

Rosie O: Wasn't it a (??) when he talked of nerves?

S: Yes. Well, clearly the same tongue that can taste the sugar, can be burnt.

Rosie O: I was thinking more of people who block off their feelings basically so that it would affect their nerves.

Annie Murphy: I thought I read some Nietzsche on the "Conference of Dialectics" that was held in London some years ago; I was looking through a book about Golden Light - I'm sorry I've forgotten the man who was speaking there - but both of them seemed to be saying that the more you deviate from the right path, using that sort of language, the more you experience

suffering. Not that you were getting closer to God when you were experiencing suffering, but the more you deviated from a positive goal, the more you experienced suffering. Suffering is actually telling you that you're doing something wrong, in fact.

S: In a sense that is true. Perhaps they're thinking in a wider analogy with physical suffering. If you have a pain somewhere, in your body, it tells you that there's something wrong - that is your body's signal to you. So maybe if you experience psychic stress or dis-ease, that's a sign to you that something is wrong. This is why, I said the other day, whether in this group or the other, that happiness is not a problem, but suffering is. If you're suffering in any way, ask yourself: "Well, why am I suffering?" If you're feeling happy you don't start worrying and ask yourself; "What is the cause of this feeling of happiness?" This is because happiness is, as it were, more normal - it's more natural to be happy. So I think to that extent probably what they were saying was correct; that if you're feeling really and genuinely happy, as distinct from hysterically elated (Laughter) that is a sign that you're on the right path even though you might have not gone very far along that path - at least you're healthy, happy and human.

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If you're emotionally upset, if you're emotionally afflicted, I think that shows you're on the wrong path, at least something has gone wrong. I mean if you were enjoying a state of ecstatic bliss and it went on for too long, you could say that something had gone wrong, you might have got caught in one of the deva realms and you ought to be pressing on. But what would you be pressing on to?- only a further, higher state of bliss. The mistake is getting stuck in a lower one when you could go on to something even greater and even better - even more enjoyable in a sense.

Annie F: How do you do that, Bhante? (Laughter)

S: Well, I won't say, "take up your cross'. (Laughter)

Annie F: I mean that seriously, how do you get that ...?

S: Well, this is really what the chapter is all about. You have to look for the favourable conditions and you have to avoid the adverse conditions. Maybe we should begin by just checking: "Well, am I in conditions which are adverse? Have I got all the favourable conditions?" And then, of course, you have to have inwardly proper mindfulness and aspirations for the good and wholesome and so on. It's really quite simple. One can see that this is so because one notices that when people are on retreat they're very different from what they are when they're not on retreat.

So it's clear how much circumstances and conditions do help or hinder you. It's not just circumstances and conditions, - it's also the effort that you make under those more favourable conditions. But you feel more able to make the effort. So creating more favourable conditions doesn't necessarily mean that you go forth in the literal sense and leave home, but there are lots of things that you can do to improve your conditions short of that. If you really want to do something, you can.

So if you really want to meditate every day you can, whatever your circumstances. You just have to tell people, if you're living at home with other people, "Well, look, at such and such a time, that's my meditation time. I don't want to hear any complaints from anybody. I don't

want to get anybody's breakfast. (Laughter) I'm not going to bandage any cut fingers. (Laughter) I'm not going to cut anyone's sandwiches. No. That's my meditation time!" Well, very quickly the family gets used to it, if it's a question of the family, or who ever else it happens to be. They get used to it. It becomes a sort of established factor in the life of the household. "That's her meditation and no one [227] interferes with that." One can train people in this way, certainly once they're passed the age of two, let's say. (Laughter)

I'm quite sure people can, if not train, at least reorganize their lives to a much greater extent than they think. The chains that chain you to the kitchen sink are invisible chains. (Laughter) Sometimes, the way some people put it, there's a literal big, thick heavy iron chain, as if you couldn't leave the kitchen sink, taking this as highly symbolical. We can reorganize ourselves a lot more than we usually think. "I couldn't possibly take a week off, the Co-op depends on me!" (Laughter) Well, put it to the test. They'll probably survive for a week without you. (Laughter) They'll survive even ten days. If you really want to study something, study a subject, study a language, learn a particular instrument, if you really want to, you can reorganize your life in such a way that you manage to do that, but you must really want to do it.

Rosie O: Is all suffering an indulgence then or is it necessary to sometimes experience suffering?

S: Well, I wouldn't say it's necessary to experience suffering, well suffering is inevitable, You will experience it sooner or later, so no need to make special arrangements! (Much laughter) No need at all, because suffering will come, at least in the form of old age, disease and death. It brings a lot of disadvantages about growing old. It's a slightly, if not painful, uncomfortable process, and death is usually at least uncomfortable. So you have to face that sooner or later, you don't need to contrive such situations. I don't really think that suffering is really good for the character and that therefore you should encourage it, or welcome it or embrace it. No, I don't think that is so. It does seem contrary to the usual way of thinking, I think enjoyment does people much more good, even spiritually in the long run, a genuine enjoyment than suffering.

Marion: Suffering seems to condition you in such a way that you're not open to enjoyment.

Rosie O: I'm still not very clear. So the only kind of valid suffering is physical suffering and the rest sort of self-hate?

S: I'm not sure what you mean by valid? I think it's suspicious, that is to say, psychologically suspicious, if you try to give yourself extra [228] suffering, extra to what you're going to inevitably experience in the course of your human life anyway. I don't say you should avoid suffering at all costs. Sometimes it may be necessary to incur suffering in the pursuit of the ideal, but if you bring suffering upon yourself unnecessarily, I think that is suspect. To put it in crude terms, you may be a masochist or something of that sort and that's not a very healthy psychological state. You may have feelings of guilt and that isn't very healthy. You may feel that you're bad and should be punished or should punish yourself, etc. etc.

Rosie O: Do you mean that the suffering you experience emotionally as contrasted to what you experience physically, like an illness, is willed?

S: You're responsible for it. You may not have willed it but you're responsible for it. Physical suffering cannot be avoided. The mere fact that you have a physical body means you're liable to physical suffering. But mental suffering, emotional suffering can be avoided.

Rosie O: I'm still getting confused because this really conflicts with the theory that you must not repress your feelings and therefore, almost to indulge in your suffering.

S: Ah, yes. Sometimes people indulge in their emotional sufferings because they think that if they do that, they're really experiencing the suffering and not avoiding it, or not suppressing it but really they're just going on manufacturing it. I suppose you make yourself angry so that you can experience your anger. But it's unnecessary. Why not make yourself happy so that you can experience your joy? If you are angry by all means acknowledge it but you shouldn't be angry. If you're suffering from anger, well, that's a mistake you're making. It's an unskilful mental state.

Marion: So it arises and then you stop it?

S: Yes, you don't repress it, you so organize your mental attitude that you develop skilful mental states which make it impossible for anger to arise.

Vajrasuri: It's like the four right efforts, isn't it?

S: Yes, indeed, yes.

(End of Tape 9)

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S: ... when I say work, I don't mean spending time on the beaches of Goa or in a snug little cave up in the Himalayas. Really working, taking classes, giving talks, travelling from place to place. That's what effort one can make there. Well, it's so to speak, rewarded a hundredfold there. There's no doubt about that. An ounce of effort there goes a very very long way; much further than it goes in this country. In terms of people's appreciation, the good that one can actually do, provided one is of course, so to speak, qualified - that's why I say Order Members and not others. But it might not be easy for all Order Members.

Annie Fowler: Does that apply to women as well?

S: Oh yes, definitely.

Annie F: I thought it would be a lot harder for women to be really effective out there.

S: In some ways, it would but there is the point that this work can be among the women in India. And in some ways, they have fewer opportunities than the men do because they are obviously more tied to their homes so perhaps it would mean working in a different sort of way among them. But it would still be quite difficult. The climate might not be easy and the general living conditions.

Anyway, that's just in passing. "And practises the tenets of the good and wholesome which are the very nature of the Perfections". There's more about the Perfections, of course, in a

later chapter which we won't be doing this time. Let's go on: We did do this passage ...

"From the very beginning to apply oneself to one's work with compassion, devoted interest and patient endurance, and to accomplish good - These virtues are known as the distinctive marks of this family."

That is to say, if from the very beginning, one applies oneself to one's work, one's spiritual work - with compassion, with devoted interest and patient endurance and if one accomplishes good, accomplishes the skilful, then these - if one has these marks - then one is known as belonging to the family of the followers of the Mahayana way of life. In a way, it's very simple, though certainly it isn't easy: to work with compassion, with devoted interest, to have patient endurance, to accomplish good, accomplish the skilful, - that's all that's really needed. But is it simple? Very uncomplicated, but not easy. (Pause)

All right, someone like to read on - to the end of the chapter:

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Dawn: "Under these circumstances, from among the five families, that of the followers of the Mahayana way of life possesses the proximate motive towards Buddhahood. Those of Sravakas and the Pratyekabuddhas, however, because they will only attain Buddhahood after a long time, possess the remote motive. The Dubious-family are those among whom some are in possession of the proximate, others of the remote, motive. Moreover the Cut-off family, who are intent on wandering in Samsara, can ultimately attain Enlightenment, because even they possess a very remote motive."

S: So the author is saying in effect, that everybody will gain Enlightenment in the end or can gain Enlightenment in the end. In the case of the followers of the Mahayana the likelihood at least is that they will gain it more quickly - that is Enlightenment in the sense of, you know, Supreme Buddhahood, because that is what they are actually aiming at. But even in the case of Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas who are not for the present aiming at Supreme Enlightenment but only at, so to speak, individual Enlightenment - in the end because eventually their eyes will be opened to the fact that that is the higher goal - that is really the ultimate goal. And the same even with those belonging to the other families. This is what has been sometimes referred to as the absolute optimism of the Mahayana.

The Mahayana is deeply convinced that everybody is on the way; that eventually everybody will get there. Not that everybody is destined to, but that the Path is always open. If at any time the Path is closed, it's because you've closed it yourself; you've slammed the door in your own face. The Mahayana does recognize that there are some people who shut themselves off from the Path to such an extent that they cannot of their own accord any longer get back on it and they have to be helped. And this is where the Bodhisattvas come in.

I mean, you can imagine for instance, the case of a person who, say, becomes an alcoholic. Well, in the very early stages when they are just beginning to get the taste of alcohol, they could stop it, they could check the habit. But if it goes too far they are not able to get themselves out of that state - they need external help. So it's a bit like that with the spiritual life. Some people get so deeply involved in the unskilful, they can't of their own volition get out of it, even if they want to. They have to be helped by others to get out of it and from that point of view, the activity of the Bodhisattva is very important.

But there is nobody who is permanently precluded from following the Path and gaining even Supreme Buddhahood - not even Devadatta who is, so to speak, the Judas Iscariot of Buddhism. If you read Dante's Divine Comedy, for instance; if you read that first part on Hell, you will find that Judas Iscariot, is at the centre of the lowest circle of Hell and he's there forever. He will never get out. But that is not the Buddhist [231] view . The Buddhist view is that however low you fall you can still rise, even though you may need a helping hand - but you can rise.

Dhammadinna: Bhante, when you say the Path is always open, do you mean potentially open? Because if you are born in a country where the Dharma is not ... or in a time period where there isn't a Buddha, then in a sense well, you have the potential but the chances of you finding the Path are (S: are less, you could say) a lot less.

S: Because the Mahayana takes into consideration the whole sequence of births. But even apart from that if you have a sort of active as distinct from a passive potential, that is to say, you will go in search of the Path. In a way, this was my own experience. I'd never heard of Buddhism originally, I just started looking for something. There was no Buddhism in my environment. I was just sort of searching for something. I think that is the experience of quite a lot of people.

Eventually you do make some sort of connection and hopefully one connection leads to another, In the end you are in contact with the Dharma itself in a very real form. But yes, there may be instances where in the course of this life, people don't make that contact. But the Buddhist view would be that if they really wanted to - well, not maybe have that sort of contact - they might not consciously know about it - to have that sort of urge, that sort of need, even if it wasn't fulfilled by the time of their death, well, that need would persist and under the law of Karma, they would be reborn under conditions more favourable to the fulfilment of that need.

Vajrasuri: Could this be one reason why it's difficult for us to introduce the Dharma into the West, because it's the least likely place for people to be reborn?

S: Well, yes, there's something in that. You sort of really find this sometimes. There are some people who really take to the Dharma, even in the West. As soon as they come in contact with it - as soon as they hear of it, "This is it!" They have no doubt at all. But others, no. It doesn't seem to get through to them at all, even though they seem to have a sort of spiritual need, but no, the Dharma seems to leave them cold. They may seem quite positive, quite healthy, quite intelligent, quite bright, but no, they don't respond to the Dharma even though they may come (into contact?). One does see this.

Vajrasuri: Only too often.

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S: Hmm, yes.

Dhammadinna: But there are some people who do walk into a Friends' centre and in that moment decide - "That's It! and it is. And then other people who sort of wonder and take time and go away and come back and I mean, maybe the centre ...

S: It's as though they are picking up the threads from before. One is really tempted to believe that; that they are re-establishing a contact that they previously had. It isn't anything new, in a sense, to them, and sometimes they do say, they feel very much at home with it. That is very often the sort of language that they use. This was certainly my own experience when I first started reading Buddhist Sutras that it was in fact quite familiar. This was in fact what I already did believe and had believed for a long time. I think this is the experience of quite a few people.

Vajrasuri: How come you got born in the wrong country? (Laughter)

S: Well, to fulfil a mission, perhaps ... (Laughter) ... as for New Zealand, some occultists hold that New Zealand is the country of the future. That's where the great spiritual revival is going to be. This is what some of them say. I don't mind people thinking that. Some say the same thing about Australia - Australia and New Zealand together, so to speak.

Dhammadinna: I think it's in some Tibetan prophesy.

S: No, I think the Theosophists say it.

Debbie Seamer: I've heard some Tibetans have said it as well.

S: But where did those Tibetans get it from? Because the very name of New Zealand, I think, doesn't occur in any Tibetan text. It wasn't discovered, unless of course, the great Masters had been looking forth from 'the great white hermitage' . (Laughter) I think it is a Theosophical teaching. Something to do with (root races) and lamas and things like that. But it's not impossible. I got a very favourable impression of New Zealand, in that respect. I can't say I felt quite the same about Australia but certainly in the case of New Zealand. I felt, that, well, the possibilities there are virtually infinite. I felt partly because New Zealand is a young country, a new country and without fixed traditions, [233] without ancient history. It can be an advantage. It is also quite a big country, although it looks small on the map. It's as big as Great Britain and relatively uninhabited.

Marion Monas: Why don't you feel that same about Australia?

S: I don't know, I'm just speaking of purely subjective impressions and in any case, I only saw Sydney. If I visited Alice Springs, I might, you know, change my mind. (Laughter) Or Perth. I spent an hour in Perth in the airport. I didn't feel that Perth or Australia was the country of the future in a spiritual sense.

Vajrasuri: The Tibetans there say it's Melbourne or Adelaide. (Laughter)

S: The Tibetans seem to go where the money is. (Loud Laughter)

Vajrasuri: I think Sydney's terrible for the Dharma.

S: I got a very positive impression of Sydney. I've heard it said that Melbourne is very English. One can understand that in any way one pleases. (Vajrasuri: It's not) Well, I do expect great things from New Zealand, especially when there's quite a good number of Order Members. I think one could really make a tremendous impression there. There's barely four

million people. South Island has got barely one million people - all of that vast area which is very, very beautiful. Barely one million people in the area about half the size of Great Britain. The county of Norfolk has six hundred thousand people. Anyway, that's all a bit speculative. No doubt the ears of the New Zealanders are flapping vigorously. (Laughter)

There's no doubt that, yes, you can follow the spiritual path any where even under the most unfavourable conditions, but if you do have favourable conditions which does not necessarily mean easy conditions you can be helped very very greatly or inspired very greatly. I've found conditions in India like that - very hard but very inspiring. I think it's better to have hard conditions which are inspiring than easy conditions which are not inspiring.

Anjali: Wouldn't you have called New Zealand easy conditions?

S: Yes, I think in a way, yes, yes. I think for the element of inspiration to be there you'd need to have quite a big FWBO movement there. [234] But you could have a big FWBO movement, comparatively big in NZ quite easily, I think, and then that would be really inspiring. I don't think the climate necessarily makes things easier because it can be a big distraction - all those sunny beaches and all that sort of thing. I think it does often act as a distraction. Not that you can't meditate on a sunny beach but I think you're unlikely to. (Laughter) But again, look at the tremendous spiritual optimism of the Mahayana. It's really quite a thought that the Mahayana has this vision of everybody on the Path to Enlightenment. It's really quite extraordinary when you contrast it with the really narrow Christian vision.

One doesn't want to be always knocking Christianity but these things have had an effect upon us and those of us who were born in a society or civilization affected by Christian ways of thinking, you're very ready to divide people into the sheep and the goats; the saved and the not-saved; the good and the bad; those destined for Heaven and those who are destined for Hell. Buddhism doesn't do that. It sees all these states as just temporary but everybody in on the Path.

Annie Fowler: Even the Christians!?!

S: Even the Christians, yes, or even the Devil, even Jesus (Laughter) if he did in fact exist - even God, even poor deluded old God. (Laughter) Buddhism sees God as a sort of Brahma whose made the mistake of thinking he created the Universe.

Linda Moody: I found that a very helpful explanation actually. It seems to make much more sense than saying there is or there isn't a God - but there actually was a God who made the mistake - people were following Him ... but it seemed a much more coherent world view ...

S: Right. There are several passages in the Pali scriptures where, well, I won't say this view is expounded but where things are actually represented as actually happening like that. There's a very amusing Sutta in the course of which God - let's call him God - is represented as beginning to have doubts about himself and his omniscience. (Laughter)

There's a monk - some of you must know the passage - the monk goes up to question God and God keeps saying: "I am God! I am the Almighty! I know everything!" and He keeps saying this. He won't answer the monk's question. He keeps repeating that he is Almighty and He knows everything. The monk persists and God in the end he sort of takes the monk aside and

says: "Look here. I actually don't know the answer to your question [235] but I can't admit it in front of all these other Gods and in front of all these angels but if you really want to know the answer to your question, go and ask the Buddha - He knows." (Laughter)

So maybe it is better at least, like God to deal with the question in that way rather than just sort of deny there is God - well from the Christian point of view, you are denying that there is God, because you know, God is by definition: omniscient and so on but you can't deny so easily the, let's say, the 'mytholog(in?)' of God. The God-image can't be so easily denied. So it's as though in the Buddhist scriptures, they recognize the 'power' if you like, of the God-image - you can't get rid of that by a purely rational (evasion?) So God is put in his place.

It's a bit similar to the Gnostic view, isn't it? Because in Gnosticism they made a distinction between - what they call the 'lower God' and the 'higher God'. The higher God is purely spiritual and has nothing to do with the creation of the Universe and the lower God who actually had created the Universe for some bad reason of his own or who thought he had anyway. According to the Christian Gnostics, the higher God was the God of Jesus and the New Testament and the lower God was the God of the Jews - the God of the Old Testament. And they, the Christian Gnostics believed, you should worship the first but not the second. He was your enemy almost. That point of view was suppressed by the Church, but you know, recently we've begun to recover it and to know more about it.

Anjali: Is it similar to what the Cathars ...?

S: Yes, the Cathars were very much of that sort of way of thinking. They believed that the Catholics worshipped the lower God or had come to worship the lower God: the God of revenge and power and punishment and fear, whereas they themselves worshipped the higher God who was the embodiment of purely spiritual qualities.

Kay: They believed everybody was the same, as well, didn't they? (S: Yes, yes) and that there wasn't any sin?

S: They didn't believe that there [was] no such thing as what we would call 'skilful' or 'unskilful' action but they certainly didn't believe in sin in the Catholic sense nor did they believe that sin could be removed by sacramental means by priests who had been specially consecrated. They didn't believe that either. In other words, they undercut the power of the Church and the organization completely and that was one of the reasons why the Church was so very much against them. They said that rites and so on performed by priests who were themselves leading immoral [236] lives had no validity whatever. Whereas the Catholic point of view was and still is that rites, that is to say, sacraments performed by priests who are even guilty of gross immorality still retain their complete efficacy.

Paula: So you've got the myth of Lucifer who was condemned for thinking he was God and at the same time God's making the same mistake. (Laughter)

S: Yes, quite. Well, the dictator always punishes the would-be-dictator who's trying to supplant them.

Rosie Ong: He's beginning to sound like Hitler.

S: Hmm, yes. You may remember that in my little booklet on 'Buddhism and Blasphemy', I described God as a sort of 'cosmic Louis XIV' (Laughter) only not so nice as Louis XIV. Louis XIV at least was a gentleman and you often suspect that God wasn't. (Laughter) Well, would a gentleman send anyone to Hell? (Laughter) But I think we need to bear these sort of differences in mind much more - not that we need to spend too much time comparing, but just remember what Buddhism is really like, especially Mahayana Buddhism. It does have this boundlessly optimistic attitude. It doesn't condemn anybody in the last analysis. It certainly recognizes the unskilful as unskilful - even the bad as bad - but it also believes that however involved in the unskilful or bad you may have been - maybe still are - you can get out. At least you can be helped out. You can set your feet on the spiritual path after all that, at any time in this life or in some future life and that certainly the possibility of Enlightenment is always there, for everyone. So this makes Buddhists much more tolerant and understanding, in a way.

Annie F: It seems to be the hallmark of Buddhism. A lot of Christians I've talked to have said that - that Buddhists are tolerant.

S: This struck me once that, when I came back from India first, some of them would say that - when they asked: "Well, what had struck you most about Buddhism?" They would say "it's tolerance". But by being out in the East for so long, I'd got rather used to this and this surprised a bit at first. Well, why are people so struck by the tolerance of Buddhism? Surely there's more in Buddhism than that. But no, for them it was such an extraordinary thing that a religion could be tolerant. It's very strange. It suggests that what had been really striking [237] them about Christianity, or different Christian Churches, was just their intolerance. This is why, - I think I said the other day people who interviewed me were quite surprised I hadn't been sort of sent to London, I hadn't been ordered by my superior to go to London to work there. I'd come of my own free will because I wanted to. They found it difficult to understand that state of affairs; that you actually were free as a Buddhist or a Buddhist monk, - you were free to go where you thought you were needed. You didn't belong to an ecclesiastical organization that was controlling your every movement.

But you know, that sort of way of thinking persists, even sometimes with the Friends, because sometimes people say to me - apropos of somebody else - "Why don't you tell them to do so and so?" I never do that - at least I hope I don't. But sometimes people would like you to tell somebody else what to do, which is usually what they think they ought to do. One can give advice - one can help people to clarify the situation in which they find themselves - one can indicate the relevant principles. One can't really tell people what to do. But you know, Christians tend to think in that sort of way. They seem to give this whole expression to - Catholics have got this 'spiritual director'. Whereas in Buddhism what do we have - a Kalyana Mitra. Maybe you could give a complete talk about the implications of that difference - that in Buddhism you have Kalyana Mitras, whereas in Catholicism, you have 'spiritual directors'.

They seem to have the same word for the director of a firm, the director of a bank even and a spiritual director. Whereas in Buddhism it's a spiritual friend. It surely isn't just an accident that there are these sort of linguistic differences, these differences of terminology. (Pause)

Would someone like to read the next paragraph?:

Debbie S: "Therefore since there exist these families in which sentient beings are grouped,

beings are endowed with Buddha-nature. In this way, for the three reasons given above, it has been shown that there is Buddha-nature in all sentient beings."

S: So if one maintains that all beings can gain Enlightenment, then putting it in rather different - as it were, (substantialate?) language, one can say that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature. We talked about this early on and did suggest there were dangers in using this sort of language but one can make that sort of statement, provided one makes it sort of provisionally, in a poetic sort of way.

All sentient beings have Buddha-nature or putting it in more dynamic terms, even more correct terms - all sentient beings are capable, if they make the proper effort, of realizing Buddhahood. After all you've got so far, - you might as well go that little extra distance.

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Anyway, on to the last paragraph, would someone read that?

Paula: "Should you ask for a simile, the following will serve: As silver is found in and may be refined from its ore, sesame oil pressed from its seed and butter churned from milk, so in all beings may Buddhahood become a reality."

S: Yes, so this may become a reality by them actually following the Path and so to speak, actualizing their own innate Buddhahood. I think it's very important also to feel this, that that potential is, in a manner of speaking, actually there. That one actually can do that, - it is within your reach. If you don't actually feel that; if you're not actually convinced of that, there won't be much real effort or momentum or zeal behind your spiritual effort. You'll be like the sick person who doesn't really believe that they'll ever get better. Well, it's unlikely that they will, if they believe that no treatment is going to do them any good; the medicine hasn't been invented that's going to cure their disease. Well, with that sort of attitude, you don't usually get better.

Voice: This is what you do in the first stage of the metta bhavana?

S: Mmm, yes, yes. Where an aspect of positivity towards yourself is that you realize and appreciate your own potential.

Marion Monas: I really feel you've taken a lot of mystique out of all this business because it makes me realize that it's possible ...

S: Yes, quite. Yes, it's possible one might say, in a sort of almost down-to-earth common-sensical sort of way. It's just a question of getting down to it, making sure you've got the right conditions and you're using the right means; you're careful and mindful and putting sufficient sustained effort into it. If you do that, yes, you can change and go on changing. There's no limit.

Annie F: That's what's so wonderful about the Dharma, because you can actually see that it's happening. You don't have to take it on trust. After a while you can see it in yourself.

S: You can see it in yourself and you can see it in other people. (Annie F: Yeah) Yes, even after a few months. I really noticed this again through going to India - I hope you're not bored

with India - (Laughter) I really noticed such a difference between the people, the Buddhists involved with the FWBO and others. They're so [239] different in so many ways, especially those who are most deeply involved of all - that is to say the Order Members and mitras. They really are different. It has made a difference to them to be involved with the Dharma in that sort of practical way. It has changed them. I certainly saw big differences in the people I hadn't seen, say, for three years. But even in the case of those that I hadn't seen before who have been involved with the FWBO for some time, they're practising meditation and studying the Dharma. They were quite different from the, as it were, raw people that we met outside the movement who came along usually to lectures for more or less the first time. I certainly noticed it again when I went to East London, to the Ambedkarite Buddhists a couple of weekends ago. They were quite a 'raw' lot. Well, they all considered themselves Buddhists but they haven't really been changed very much.

One can see the difference. The Dharma does make a difference, I mean, if you practise it. It's quite a simple and practical thing.

Vajrasuri: How are they calling themselves Buddhists then if they're not practising the Dharma or is their understanding of Buddhism different from ours or what?

S: Well, it's a bit different, at least to begin with, and also their understanding of practice is sort of different because by the very nature of this situation they are quite understandably concerned with a different aspect of the Dharma from that which we're concerned, perhaps. They are very much concerned about the Caste System because they suffer under it, maybe every day - so they are very much concerned with Buddhism as a means of 'escape' or 'liberation', if you like, from the tyranny of the Caste System. That's their point of departure mostly, but those of them who are already involved with us now have gone far beyond their original point of departure.

I mean, when I was around - 20 to 25 years ago - for many people, for many of their leaders and representatives, a lecture on Buddhism meant a lecture devoted to abusing the Brahmins. That was a lecture on Buddhism, that was what Buddhism was all about. I'd had quite a bit of this in East London the other weekend. Even though they were living in Britain and had no contact with the Brahmins at all, one young man went on and on and on about the Brahmins in an abusive sort of a way ...

Vajrasuri: They wouldn't be suffering in Britain under the Caste System?

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S: No, they wouldn't be but that was still Buddhism to them. Buddhism meant they could say those sort of things. They were stuck in that ... So in our case we tend to approach Buddhism from a different sort of angle, very often the angle of say, psychological problems. We get stuck in that. (Pause)

Kay: Would most people be having classes?

S: Well, yes, we do run classes: Dharma study classes, meditation classes, but you know, the number of Order Members is very limited and a lot of the Order Members - the Indian ones that is to say - are not full-timers. They've got jobs, they've got wives and families. They do what they can. So that means that the number of classes that we can run is limited.

Kay: Are the ones in - was it Plaistow? - in East London that you ...

S: Oh, you're talking about both. Well, they don't run any classes, no. They just have celebrations once or twice a year. One or two of them have expressed interest in classes, even meditation classes, but I don't know whether they can get them off the ground by themselves. We may be able to help. I certainly invited them all to come to the LBC, but some of them may, but I think the majority might not want to. It's quite an unfamiliar way of doing things - an unfamiliar approach to Buddhism, in not abusing the Brahmins. (Laughter) Or something of that sort. And they are very unorganized or disorganized - very unmindful, I'm afraid.

But in India, you see such big changes. Certainly in the case of a lot of people who are really in direct contact. And they really take to the Dharma - and in their approach to the Dharma - so readily - it's just what they need; just what they want. In some ways it is amazing that a system or an approach which is worked out in England, mainly in London, should be so appropriate to the needs of people in India, but it is. They very quickly cotton-on to this. There's no real competition out there, unfortunately.

Vajrasuri: Do you think it's appropriate (inaudible) ...?

S: Well, one would have thought there would be differences in India, but in some other places it doesn't seem to have worked quite so well. I mean, things haven't been going all that well, say, in Finland. One wonders whether it's anything to do with our approach; whether [241] it's anything to do with local attitudes, one never really is quite sure.

Vajrasuri: Bhante, would you care to say something about the difference between the psychological and the spiritual, again? (Laughter)

S: Well, one can only repeat what may in some ways be, at least to some people, just words. I use the word 'spiritual' in two different ways. Sometimes, you know, I contrast the spiritual with the psychological and sometimes I contrast the spiritual with the transcendental and sometimes I don't.

By psychological, I mean everything that pertains to the states of consciousness which people usually experience, which doesn't go beyond that. By spiritual, I mean, everything to do with mental states which are very much more positive or clear or skilful than people usually experience - but which still can be undone - which can be reversed. By transcendental, I mean those states of positivity, or creativity, clarity and so on which are so much so, that they cannot be undone. They cannot be reversed.

Vajrasuri: Whereas the psychological always can?

S: Yes. Sometimes I use the word 'spiritual' in a very broad sense, simply contrasting the spiritual with the psychological and not distinguishing 'spiritual' from 'transcendental' - sometimes I do distinguish 'spiritual' from 'transcendental'.

So the 'psychological' pertains to the Kamaloka, in Buddhist terms - the 'spiritual' pertains to the rupa and the arupaloka and the 'transcendental' refers to the part beyond that - from the point of Stream Entry onwards. It's a rough correspondence because the different terms are drawn from two different cultures, two different traditions.

Vajrasuri: Do you think there's, or do you have any experience of or knowledge of ... there seems to be many many 'psychological growth' groups currently emerging in the West, many many of them. Are you aware of whether they border on the spiritual at all or are they always still ...

S: My impression is that they don't. (Vajrasuri: They're still stuck in the womb?) Yes, that's my impression. I mean, as you say, there is a proliferation of these groups, that must mean there's a lot of them - it could be that there are some who approximate to what I call the spiritual, but I certainly don't get that impression through [242] my personal contacts with people who have been involved with these groups. They seem very common of orientation ... (End of Side A)

... much more

Paula: Do you think that you'd be more likely to be receptive to the Dharma having been involved with ... ?

S: Again as far as my experience goes, less likely. Well, let me make a distinction. People who have been involved in running such activities are less likely to be receptive. Some of those who have just been involved in the activities themselves may be receptive to something more.

Voice: Would they be involved in (similar meditation courses?)

S: Yes, yes, but it's as though the people who run them always have a special claim to the person(al). That's been my impression, so far. With very definite fixed limitations and very accustomed to lead. This seems to be a great weakness: a lot of these people would like to be group leaders. I noticed this when I went to (Holland) Centre because I was in contact with Vajrayogini. You may know that Vajrayogini has her own institute of communication, Gestalt therapy and so on which she's now resigned from. But she was running a course for Gestalt therapy group leaders because she had quite a lot of experience about Gestalt therapy and leading Gestalt therapy groups and she said a lot of people applied to join the course, take the course to qualify themselves as Gestalt therapy group leaders who had had no experience of Gestalt therapy at all. They just wanted to become group leaders straight away and actually thought that that was possible. So there are quite a lot of people in this sort of field, setting up as, say, group leaders and conducting activities without ever having gone through the activities so to speak, as a pupil, as a learner. So a lot of the people who set up these groups are of this type. Not all; no doubt some are pupils of other group leaders but a lot set up as group leaders straight away. It isn't very difficult to do, especially if they've got lots of energy, self-confidence; they've read a bit about the different techniques, maybe visited a few encounter groups. They set up; they consider themselves perfectly competent to help people, to grow - to develop. It seems extraordinary!

Vajrasuri: And then there are those people who just love being led.

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S: Yes, yes, mustn't forget them,' (Laughter) Quite! Well again, this was one of the points I was making in several of my lectures in India - that in India the tendency is, I said, to have leaders and followers even in religious movements, whilst in the FWBO we don't have

leaders and followers. We have teams of people working together you know, for certain common objectives. And the people to whom I spoke really appreciated this point very very much. It was mainly in Aurangabad, speaking to the students and professors in the Milinda College which is run by the Buddhist Peoples' Educational Society. I made this point and they appreciated it very very much. They could see the weakness of this sort of, you know, "I lead, you follow " type of approach.

Vajrasuri: It's Christian in its ...

S: It's very Indian too. In India people do think in terms of leaders and followers very very much. But I made it clear, that wasn't the Buddhist approach That the Buddha Himself repudiated being a leader. When Devadata asked the Buddha to hand over the leadership of the Sangha he refused. He said: "I wouldn't even hand it over to Sariputra and Maudgalyayana" and then on another occasion near his death he said "I do not think that I lead the Sangha. If anybody thinks that he can lead the Sangha, let him come forward' - and nobody came forward. So still the Buddha repudiated this sort of idea of leadership. There was a community in that case, of Enlightened beings and so the question of leadership doesn't arise. There's greater or lesser experience, or degrees of experience - maybe some people have more voice than others due to their greater experience, but there's no leadership in the political sense - not within a spiritual movement.

Vajrasuri: Just inspiration.

S: Inspiration or a greater degree of Kalyana Mitrata. Somebody else can give you more Kalyana Mitrata than you can give him, that's the only difference. Not that he is the leader and you are all the followers - that doesn't conduce to spiritual development, that sort of attitude, that sort of approach. But there are lots of people trading on this.

Vajrasuri: Well, it's easy isn't it? I mean the leader and the sheep ...

S: It's an easier thing to do; it's not an easier way of leading a [244] spiritual life because you're not leading a spiritual life then, at all.

Vajrasuri: You don't have to think or make any ...

Annie Fowler: It's quite dangerous because you might think you're leading a spiritual life when in fact you're not.

S: Oh, yes, indeed!

Vajrasuri: I know a lot of these pseudo groups believe that they are spiritual groups. They're using the terms 'meditation' and 'spiritual development'.

Annie Fowler: There's Rajneesh ... and even claim to be enlightened, some of them.

S: Yes, - well I remember an instance some years ago - this was from Finland - I don't know if you met the chap who claimed to be enlightened' - what was his name? It began with a G? (VP: (Gunaro?)) Gunaro(?), Gunaro(?) - yes it was strange - it was five or six years ago or more and I started getting letters from Vajrabodhi saying well he got a bit worried about it.

He had heard that someone had arisen in Finland, who was Enlightened, a Buddha - and Vajrabodhi was then trying to get the FWBO started - (he wondered how this might affect things) (Laughter) So anyway, he eventually met this young man who claimed to be Enlightened and I met him too - he was quite a pleasant enough chap (Laughter) so Vajrabodhi gathered he had some sort of experience but he hadn't actually been Enlightened or anything like that. So I talked to him about it and he said frankly that no, he hadn't gained Nirvana but he thought that that was the way to gain disciples. That if he said that he was Enlightened, you know, he'd get more disciples, more people would come to him and he said this quite naively as though it was a quite understandable ploy. You know, that it was quite acceptable that you should get disciples in that way by saying that you had gained Enlightenment and realized Nirvana because - well why did you want disciples? Well, you wanted to lead them on the right path - the assumption that he knew what the 'right path' was, so it was quite acceptable to claim to be an Enlightened man - in order to get this. So he certainly pulled in a lot of disciples. They didn't stick with him very long and eventually he fell in love with one of the lady disciples - she led him a pretty dance, I must say. (Laughter) She taught him a thing or [245] two. He went off to Canada to lick his wounds there for a while. I haven't heard very much of him or from him since - but he did attract a lot of people. He was quite sort of well set-up, quite presentable, quite flirty, quite handsome, quite a bit of charisma - but any way, it didn't last very long.

Vajrasuri: What do you reckon 'charisma' is. Is it - it seems to be an outward ingredient ...

S: Well, I don't really know - sublimated sex appeal, very often. (Laughter) I think that's an element in it, in some cases. The gift of the gab, that's another one. If you have the gift of the gab, you must be very careful; you must watch yourself. Self-confidence: that's quite an important one.

Voice: Something wrong with sex appeal? (Laughter)

S: I think Rajneesh has a strong dose of that - sex appeal - a rather grubby sort of (way) - judging by the photographs of him (Laughter). If I remember, the man who started 'Gestalt Therapy' was Fritz Perls. Vajrayogini sort of studied under him or trained under him for a bit. So talking about him one day, I said: "You know, Vajrayogini, look at his picture. He just looks a dirty old man". So she said, "Well, yes, actually, that's what he was." (Laughter)

Anyway, we won't dwell on that sort of area - but all these sort of pseudo-religious or pseudo-spiritual factors do come into the picture, unfortunately sometimes.

I mean I got a letter only this morning from Buddhadasa saying that a certain Theravada Bhikkhu had, you know, visited the Auckland centre. Buddhadasa felt, well, we ought to lay on something for him, so they gave him a little bit of a reception and asked him to say a few words. But Buddhadasa felt very uneasy about it all, especially since the bhikkhu ticked him off. He was a Western Bhikkhu - I won't mention any names - and said - and told Buddhadasa that he should address him as 'Bhante'. So there was an Oriental bhikkhu with him - Buddhadasa looked at the Oriental bhikkhu and the Oriental bhikkhu looked at Buddhadasa and the Oriental bhikkhu whispered, "I've had to put up with this for the last two weeks!" (Loud laughter) And Buddhadasa led, recited the Sevenfold Puja but the bhikkhu wouldn't join in, presumably because it was a Mahayana Puja, he just sat there silently. I'm afraid Buddhadasa felt, well, not very comfortable at all. He felt it was quite sort of artificial [246]

sort of situation. He says he's not going to do anything like that again.

Vajrasuri: Where did he come from?

S: Well, he originally come from Britain - I mean, I know him quite well. He stayed with me for a while in Kalimpong, quite a number of years ago.

Dhammadinna: Was this the Bhikkhu who turned up to one of our lectures (Voice: No, no) That was an odd situation.

S: But anyway, Buddhadasa says he doesn't in any way regret the experience. Anyway, how did we get on to that?

Annie F: Charisma!

S: Yes. I really think Charisma is quite a dangerous thing. If you detect signs of charisma in yourself, I suggest you eliminate them as quickly as possible.

Vajrasuri: If I detect it in somebody else, it immediately turns me off them.

S: Especially if you see them deliberately exercising their charisma, even exploiting their own charisma and sometimes this does happen. I mean obviously charisma here doesn't include some with natural, genuine sincere positivity or enthusiasm, that is another thing, that is another matter altogether. I think you can usually recognize that as something different.

Vajrasuri: Does 'persona', whatever that is - does that come into charisma as well?

S: I think to some extent and I think this is what Buddhadasa seemed to have felt with this bhikkhu that there was a false - well, yes, a 'persona' there. He was holding up a 'persona' relating to him Buddhadasa and others through that 'persona'. This is what made him feel rather uneasy that he wasn't really in touch with that person. That person wasn't perhaps in touch with himself. He was standing on a certain position. Hence the ticking off about addressing him by his name, instead of calling him 'Bhante'.

According to the Pali scriptures, it was a common thing [247] in the Buddha's day for lay people to address monks just by their names; quite acceptable. The lay man would come along and say: "Well, Ananda, may I see the Buddha?" or "Ananda, please come to my house for dana today."

Annie F: You mean that it's not the practice now? Do people always call the bhikkhu, Bhante?

S: Oh yes, in Theravada countries this is ... (Annie F: Oh really!) They would never dream of addressing him any other way.

Dhammadinna: So that removes the personal element in the communication immediately, doesn't it? (S: A bit, yes, a bit)

Anjali: Do the Anagarikas in India try and discourage that ...?

S: Yes people usually insist on calling them 'Bhante' because they wear the robes. But this is not so much within the movement - this is with whom we come into contact - with us ...

Annie Fowler: I know Lokamitra found it really difficult at first. He couldn't get used to it at all.

S: He's got used to it now! (Annie F: Has he!) (Laughter)

Vajrasuri: What happens when you're both there?

S: Well they say 'Bhante' to everybody in yellow robes. They say 'Bhante' to Purna too.

Vajrasuri: Well, no, what I mean is, do they differentiate which Bhante they mean (Laughter) ... Do they say Bhante Sangharakshita ...?

S: Yes, they do, yes. I'm afraid they make quite a distinction. At least I'm older - that's also quite important. It's much easier to do things and get things done if you're older. I've been known a long time.

Vajrasuri: That's funny because often in the West, it's the opposite ...

S: Yes, young people there don't have much say, but they don't [248] seem to expect much say. They usually just be around and hear what their elders have to say - maybe just put in the odd word. They don't feel uncomfortable being in that sort of situation. Fathers often bring their growing sons along and the sons just sit or stand around, listen and don't say anything. They're quite happy to be there, taking it all in. They don't feel they need to join in and have their say. They don't think in that sort of way. (Pause)

Anyway, we've come to the end of the chapter so we might as well stop there on that positive, optimistic, universalistic, Mahayanistic note. (Laughter) There's hope for all - that includes everybody. More than hope, in fact it's more than just hope - hope is not enough in a way. So tomorrow we'll start on the next chapter ...

(End of Tape 10)

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