

Study with the Sukhavati community

9 July 1982

MICCHA DITTHIS

S: I thought that this evening we might talk about miccha ditthis. One of the reasons being that miccha ditthis are very subtle and very elusive. So much so that I experience considerable difficulty in thinking up even a short list of miccha ditthis. It's as though if you don't keep the miccha ditthi firmly in view it sort of disappears or sort of sneaks up behind you and sort of infiltrates your thinking. So I have managed to sort of catch a few miccha ditthis by the tail, so to speak. I'm going to talk about some of them. It may be that more miccha ditthis emerge or people can think of more as the discussion proceeds. I think Sagaramati probably has got quite a few. (laughter) When I said that, not that you personally entertained them (laughter) but that they were miccha ditthis which you had detected from time to time in the course of your study groups and which you had detected, exposed from time to time in the course of your study groups and then included in your collection of defunct miccha ditthis for future reference. Subhuti did collect quite a few in Tuscany. You know as a result of our various discussions; but when I called upon to produce them, he had to admit that they were lost somewhere among his files and he wasn't able actually to find them. But he did mention one or two he'd remembered, but they were also on my list, my short list, which didn't help us very much. But any way, I have noticed that when one starts talking about miccha ditthis one thing leads to another, one miccha ditthi leads to another and miccha ditthis just start emerging. You realize that you've seen these miccha ditthis in yourself or in other people or both. And you realize that there are more and more miccha ditthis actually in existence some of them very subtle but quite dangerous nonetheless.

But really, before we start perhaps I'd better say a few words in explanation of the term itself: miccha ditthi. Miccha means false or wrong or untrue. And ditthi means a view, in the sense of opinion as formulated, even systematically formulated, logically formulated. Miccha ditthi can mean not just a false view, not just a wrong view, but even a wrong attitude which is subsequently rationalized into a sort of pseudo-logical point of view. Miccha ditthi can mean even a sort of false philosophy, a whole sort of systematic way of looking at the universe, which you've elaborated as the result of your basically quite wrong attitude towards life itself. For instance, in Buddhism traditionally eternalism is regarded as a miccha ditthi. Nihilism is regarded as a miccha ditthi. That there is a permanent unchanging soul is regarded as a miccha ditthi. That existence is either entirely painful or else entirely pleasurable, these are miccha ditthis. That there is no transcendental realm, no transcendental experience, this is a miccha ditthi. That there are no individual beings who have realized these higher super normal state that is a miccha ditthi. These are the classic miccha ditthis. But these sort of miccha ditthis are not the ones that more likely to afflict people nowadays.

Modern miccha ditthis tend to be quite subtle and people are often caught up in them without being very well aware of what they are caught up in or that what they are caught up in is in fact a miccha ditthi. Some miccha ditthis are not very clear cut. Others are more clear cut. So you see the sort of thing I'm getting at or the sort of thing I mean when we talk about miccha ditthis. And you [2] may remember that the tenth of the ten precepts of the Upasaka, the tenth of the ten kusala dharmas is miccha dasana veramani. Miccha dasana and miccha ditthi are the same thing. Dasana or darshana is view, especially as systematically formulated. Often

translated as opinion. So the fact that abstention from miccha ditthis is included in these precepts suggests, well first of all, abstention from miccha ditthi is very important, and also that the precepts themselves are not just ethical in a straight forward sense. They also relate to quite deep-seated, even deep-rooted underlying attitudes. So these last three precepts are abstention from craving, addiction, abstention from antagonism, hatred, malevolence and from miccha ditthis, false views or wrong views, wrong outlooks, or mistaken out-looks, false philosophies of every kind. So it's just some of these that I want to look at this evening. At least some of these on this short list.

Maybe I'll start with one or two easy ones ? which aren't very difficult to recognize as miccha ditthis. So even though they are quite prominent, quite prevalent, one may encounter them in connection with [going] along to classes or to the centre generally. So one that I've got down on my list is that what people who come along to centres and to classes will very often be thinking that tolerance is a very good thing. And that Buddhism is a very tolerant religion, a very tolerant faith. And they may even be very much attracted by this idea, that Buddhism is tolerant. Especially if they've had a not very pleasant experience of Christianity. We are aware that Christianity, historically speaking, is not a very tolerant faith. So tolerance may acquire a considerable importance in their eyes. I remember some years ago when I was at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, I asked one particular person who came along what had brought her, what had attracted her, what she found so attractive in Buddhism. So she at once said "Oh Buddhism is so tolerant" As though it meant that it was something quite out of this world for her that Buddhism should be so tolerant I don't remember what her experience of Christianity had been, but the tolerance of Buddhism really struck her very, very forcibly. I think that is the impression and quite rightly the impression of quite a number of people. But then what happens is this: they might be quite deeply imbued with this idea, that Buddhism is a tolerant religion, but then they might hear, say an Order Member in the course of a talk criticize a particular point of view. Or they might even hear a tape of mine and hear me criticize a particular point of view. And they might feel quite, in a way, disappointed or disillusioned. And they might say "Well, Buddhism is a very tolerant religion. How come that you criticize other people or other points of view, or other philosophies? Buddhists shouldn't do that, Buddhism is tolerant. So where's the miccha ditthi? Or is there a miccha ditthi ? What has happened here?"

VAIROCANA: It's as though it is a confusion between tolerance and compromise in a way. Comprising a view some people see that the actual compromise, that is being tolerant.

KULANANDA: It is a suggestion that criticism is intolerant.

S: Yes. It's the suggestion that criticism itself is a form of intolerance, which also suggests that they've got perhaps a strange idea about tolerance itself. So what do you think might be their idea about tolerance?

RATNAKETU: You just let everybody be or do what they like without making judgement on them.

[3]

S: Yes that's true. Sometimes it even goes further than that. It is put, as it were, more affirmatively than that. Especially with regard to all the other different religions and philosophies.

VOICES: They're all the same.

S: Yes, they're all the same paths to the same thing.

KULANANDA: Unconsciously based on some idea of a cosmic plan. Sort of everything is progressing and everything will eventually turn out all right.

S: Yes, but there is more to it than that. It is based upon the idea also that criticism is essentially negative and maybe people, in some cases, have encountered only criticism which is negative. So they assume and here also I think maybe a special miccha ditthi comes in, that if you criticize, it cannot but be in a negative state of mind. So they've no conception of criticism as something positive and constructive.

RATNAKETU: And there's the confusion between negative and positive as to what they are. Positive means being nice and friendly and negative means anything that isn't positive.

S: Yes, right. I was talking a bit about this in a study group the other day. And I gave an instance, I said that I hear sometimes from people about their conversation with other people. And they might say something like this; "I had a talk with so and so, I said what I thought, but I got a very negative response from him". By which they mean that he disagreed with them. So you see what I mean? So negative can be used in a quite an ambiguous way. Negative means, in the first place just negation, denial, which can be quite positive. But you can also be negative, in the sense of the emotionally-negative, meaning being imbued with unskillful emotions, especially those connected with anger and hatred. See what I mean? So the fact that someone disagrees with you, negates what you are saying, logically, does not mean that he or she is in an emotionally-negative state of mind. But only too often one slips from the one usage to the other, and you say, if someone just disagrees with you, he may disagree quite happily and in a friendly way, well then you say: "I got a very negative response from him." Do you see what I mean? I mean one may see disagreement even, not just criticism as inherently, emotionally negative, and therefore obviously as being incompatible with a Buddhist attitude.

RATNAKETU: I discovered a really extreme form of this in that I heard of a machine that was made to produce positive mental states in people by pushing negative ions out into the atmosphere and so that you put these negative ions into the atmosphere and that draws out the opposite in you, which is the positive. You could say well hang negatives of a photographic plate but it doesn't make you really happy, it's just the same word but completely confused. (laughter) It's ridiculous; there's these machines being sold, so that people plug them in and try and make themselves positive.

SAGARAMATI: There is a scientific basis to it too many negative ions in the atmosphere tend to make you a bit more drowsy.

RATNAKETU: But to say that these machines will make you 'positive'...

SAGARAMATI: It's more or less just loose language. There is some basis to it.

S: But here you've got this wrong view that apparently criticism [4] cannot but be negative. So that if you as a Buddhist criticized Christianity, it must be with a emotionally negative

attitude and your criticism must be unjustified that nothing wrong could in fact be said about Christianity and this is connected with another miccha ditthi, Because we'll find I think that all miccha ditthis tend to be interconnected sooner or later, in one sort of happy family. Oh dear, I forget what I was going to say (laughter) They really do slip one's attention. Where was I? Oh yes. Anything that passes under the name of religion cannot be criticized because it is a religion. You see what I mean? It doesn't matter what it's like, so to speak; in itself what it is really like. If it passes as religion it is sacrosanct It mustn't be criticized.

KULANANDA: I think at the root of this particular miccha ditthi is a form of authoritarianism, which is a very large scale authoritarianism which won't admit a smaller authoritarianism within it. It's so authoritarian, that you cannot actually take a stand that seems to be authoritarian, because that would be conflicting with the highest authority that there is, the divine plan. Where everything is going to be all right in millennium.

S: Yes that's true. But also in connection with Christianity, ex-Christians can still feel very reluctant to criticize Christianity just out of fear, possibly even fear of retribution; at least sort of sub-consciously.

NAGABODHI: I sometimes think that ex-Christians or non-Christians with their getting interested in Buddhism and other religions, they want to say that Jesus was all right and make all these... I sort of suspect them of not wanting to relinquish what was once, a maybe, beneficial projection along the way. It was something to do with their spiritual aspirations and I've often actually accused them of doing that...

S: Well, this links up with another micchaditthi: that you don't have to think that you did in away commit a mistake; that, you were on the wrong path, because that would mean that time had really been lost. But I think sometimes you do have to face up to that. That you may actually have lost time, wasted time, But often I find people do not like to face up to this realization.

NAGABODHI: I think with regard to people who need to reject Christianity, it's not even that time has been wasted but somewhere they maybe intuit a colossal stupidity and it's just embarrassing. Existentially embarrassing.

S: The outrageousness of it. They might feel really very very angry And not be willing to face up to that. I mean, in a way it's hanging on to the past. You cannot write off the past: "The past is past; I wasted it". "I wasted twenty years with Christianity, all my church going and listening to sermons and bible reading. It was all wasted time, but now, I'm on the right path". But if you are on the right path, what does it matter, in a way, that twenty years were wasted? You can acknowledge that now, you are on the right path; if that is in fact the way that you feel. But to get back to the former miccha ditthi: that, nothing that passes under the name of religion should be criticized. I think this is very prevalent. I mean, people do not like to hear you criticize the Crusades, or the Inquisition, the Pope's views on birth control etc. etc. You're being "intolerant"

RATNAKETU: I did actually meet somebody just very recently who would not, did not like to hear me criticize the Inquisition. Because he said "You didn't know what state of mind people were in when they were killing those other people. It might have actually been good for their growth and development. (laughter) Strange.

[5]

S: Also, if you criticize, you are assuming a definite standard of right and wrong. You have made up your mind that something is skilful and something is unskilful. And that means you are confronted with a choice. I think some people shrink from that, because it is a form of commitment. You have to take a stand and that is not always easy .

JINAPRIYA: What I find with that is, a more worrying aspect, is when people find it really quite hard to criticize aspects of the Buddhist so called tradition: what actually is unskilful. I've come across that

S: I mean I've come up against the fact that some people do not like that I criticize some aspects of traditional Buddhism. They criticize me for that. But then I say "You shouldn't criticize me". I mean they think that that's all right to criticize me, criticize the FWBO. that is all right. But we mustn't criticize anything else. "The sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander" Or let's say "chilli for the gander".

RATNAKETU: It seems that quite a few of these are connected up with words. I mean it doesn't matter what it is, if it's called religion its got that name, that word by it, well then you cannot do it. It's called religion or if that person was a Buddhist, called themselves a Buddhist, it doesn't matter who, what they're like, what that group of people did, you cannot criticize it, because it's got the word stuck there.

S: But this all goes back also to a misconception of tolerance itself I mean, people seem in the West very often unable to understand that you can have a definite point of view of your own, you can criticize other points of view, you can do that in a completely friendly positive way, without any inclination to force other people to follow your point of view. They seem unable to understand that that sort of attitude, that sort of state of mind is possible. But I mean Buddhism has shown historically that it is so; because Buddhism has not persecuted anybody for his religious beliefs, or non-religious beliefs. But Buddhism has always had its own very clear point of view, which it has quite vigorously defended and vigorously asserted, but never with violence. And that's a quite new phenomenon as far as the West is concerned. Because here, that sort of assertiveness, well that seems to be that sort of assertiveness, has usually been accompanied with violence. But that was never the case in the East with Buddhism.

RUCHIRAKETU: This probably is the reason why people are so "tolerant" because they are frightened of... That it might turn into religious war.

S: There is that. They don't realize that the Buddhist position and Buddhist attitude is in fact really quite different. (pause)

There's another one I've got down under: "feeling and judgement; fact and value". Can you gain any inkling what that is all about?

SAGARAMATI: Because you feel something it must be an objective fact.

S: Yes. Your personal hunch.

SAGARAMATI: Because you feel something it cannot be criticized or questioned.

S: Yes and other people have to accept it as a fact, because of your feeling, because of the strength of your feeling. You know the sort of thing I'm talking about?

KULANANDA: I think that's a particularly Buddhist miccha ditthi, an FWBO one.

S: Well, I'm sure it is much more widespread than that. But we [6] certainly do encounter it within the FWBO. What I said a little while ago about... what was it now, another miccha ditthi which linked up with this one? It's slipped me. It'll come back.

SAGARAMATI: Is that the link between the feeling and it comes over as a judgement.

S: Yes... Hmm.

RUCIRAKETU: You can get that with art if you like art then it's good but there can be nothing objective.

S: It's true that art is a matter [of] taste but nonetheless, well the experience of art is a matter taste, there are as it were objective criteria. I had a quite interesting experience in this connection in New Zealand on my first visit, when I was having a Question and Answer session at the Centre. There were quite a lot of people there, including relatively new people, and I made quite a few controversial statements, but people didn't seem to bother with them, they didn't react at all. But when I mentioned about art and that I thought a certain kind of modern art wasn't art at all, there was a tremendous reaction from several people in the audience who'd kept quiet during all my remarks on spiritual life, Buddhism, even though, as far as I thought they were highly controversial. But, as soon as I said, such and such's painting just wasn't art, well, one woman in particular really got up in arms: "who was I to say that it wasn't art. And her opinion was just as good as mine and she thought it was", and so on. She really raved and ranted on in this way. Two of three other people did too. They got really het up about this.

KULANANDA: It's highly sacred stuff, art.

JINAPRIYA: Because it is so subjective again, everyone thinks their opinion is equally valid; that is the sort of thinking. The possibility that somebody else could have a considerably more informed opinion on the subject ...

S: Well, It's not even an opinion. Art is a matter of taste, but some tastes are more cultivated, developed and refined than others. That is where the objective criteria as it were comes in.

RATNAKETU: Maybe those people were thinking: "well you might know more about Buddhism and things but when it actually comes down to the subjective, you were no different".

S: In other words, the Buddhism didn't make any difference. For instance, I was talking about what I called sick art, which was, as it were, people vomiting on to the canvas. It may have a therapeutic value, but I say it's just not art. But this woman really objected to that. "It was art", she said. I don't think she came up to the Centre again. But again in art, anything goes: you know, "tie a piece string in knots and say well this is a work of art, it's just as good as anything Michelangelo ever did." People virtually say this sort of thing nowadays. It's so

utterly ridiculous, and where in this name of tolerance and freedom of thought, every man has a right to his view in the field of art, well these sort of assertions are possible.

JINAPRIYA: It was interesting when you said that the woman didn't come along again. It seems to me to be a general thing that people have to have absolute agreement on every subject to "get on". You see elements of that.

S: I think that it isn't necessary to have to agree with somebody about everything to be able to "get on", as it were. It means that you've got very little faith in friendship or human feeling, if you think that complete intellectual agreement is necessary before you can get on with somebody. I mean, no conception of fierce friendship [7] for instance. I think that little issue of the Newsletter did provoke quite a bit of discussion (inaudible) ...

NAGABODHI: In the long run we've had more feedback from that issue than ...

S: Is that the issue that contained my review of D. H. Lawrence? I lost a few friends over that, friends outside the FWBO.

NAGABODHI: Did you? No I think that was the inspiration issue. We carried Kovida's review of your Buddhism and Blasphemy booklet.

S: Yes I think I lost a few friends over that too, outside the FWBO. Oh yes. When I say friends, I mean in the more conventional sense, but they were quite unhappy with that.

S: Who could have objected to your Lawrence review?

S: Couples. I mean, this is by the way, but I was reading a "Wheel" publication, a couple of articles reprinted from somewhere, "Buddhism and Psychiatry". And it was very interesting; they were talking about psychiatry, working on couples, or with couples there is no questioning of the couple type of set up; you just helped couples to be better couples, as it were. And I noticed, I don't know whether this is usual, but the writer, who was an American medical man, a psychiatrist with some interest in Buddhism, was referring to the couple in the singular. I'd never come across this before. Am I just out of date? He said: "when a couple is interested in meditation" ... Do you see what I mean (laughter) I would have always said "if a couple were interested" using the plural because there were two people. But he was consistently using the singular, as though a couple represented a single entity. And this seemed to me quite significant, this sort of usage. Anyway that's by the way. But I did lose friends over that Lawrence review because I questioned this concept of the couple fairly drastically. I was rather pleased with that little simile of mine about the couple being like two people tied together for a three-legged race: three legs don't run faster than two. Again you could say this is false logic: two legs are pretty fast, well three would run even faster." do you see what I mean? But no, it doesn't turn out like that, does it? Three legs in this case are a lot slower than two.

But this question of subjectivity and your own feeling and its sort of absolute validity, we can go back to that in a minute; but I'm going to glance across to another related miccha ditthi, which is that of the of "the private life". I came across this in a letter, I'm sorry to say from an Order Member. What he stated was that people's relationships by which he meant sexual relationships were completely sacrosanct and exempt from criticism. Do you see what I mean

? It's just like religion. If you say "well its a relationship, no one must criticize it, no one must call it into question, even if there might be an unskilful element in it etc., etc., because that is your private life. And your private life is your private life" "No one should say anything about it". Do you see what I mean? This is quite strong with some people. That, "you have a right to a private life, which no one can look at , which no one has any right to examine or question you about. That little private area which usually means you sex-life sometimes other things as well. So I was wondering how this idea of the private life originated. Because, say in India, the idea of private life is almost meaningless to them, and I think in Ancient Greece, the idea of private life ... I think it must have arisen during the Victorian period. It is only a bit of speculation on my part, because I mean a certain type of public image, social image was require of you, a respectable one, which didn't accommodate, or make provision for certain other attitudes of feelings. So they had to [8] be conducted or indulged quite privately, separately. So in this way the public life and the private life came to be separated and people started feeling very protective about their private life, knowing, that if the private life became public, well in some cases it would mean ruin. I mean, for instance as in the case of Parnell, the famous Irish politician, who was discovered to have committed adultery. That was the end of his public career, end of his political career, and there are a number of other instances of the same kind, his was just a particularly famous one It was absolutely the end. (Inaudible voice) Well he shouldn't have done it in Britain. This was the view of the whole weight of the great British public. You were finished, It wasn't like that even at the beginning of the eighteenth century, but during the Victorian period it was.

RATNAKETU: It also seems that it's not just private life that you can have separate parts of yourself, separate and independent, so - that you can say with a politician that he's got a "fault", say adulterous life, but that is just part of his whole make up and so there's other parts as well. You know you cannot have hour good bits and you had bits.

S: It's as though a private life as almost forced upon you, or that sort of division if the society in which you live requires of you certain kinds of persona. You have to be a very brave and a very bold man to go in the face of those requirements and not care what people think. Well sometimes, it's fatal. Sometimes in self-defence you have to have a kind of private life. But anyway, I'm just mentioning these speculations, in order to try to explain why we've got this idea of a private life at all. But actually its quite unfortunate that we should have, there shouldn't be any division. Because obviously there are certain levels of communication, degrees of communication, you can talk more freely to some people than others, therefore talk more freely about everything to some people than to others. But there shouldn't really be a sort of hard and fast division between your public life and your private life. I think this is very crippling for the individual. But a lot of people even some of our own friends sort of hang on to this private life because they fear criticism. They fear that it is an area of weakness, They don't want to expose it. They don't want anyone to have any right to say anything about it. There is a very good example in literature of this gradual exposure of someone's private life, and the terrible consequences. In this case I think it was the exposure of some kind of financial misdealing. And that's in Middlemarch, Mr Bolestrode (?) Do you remember that? There is a very, very good exposition of that whole... very sympathetic, but quite deadly. And when I read that I was really quite shaken by that. I ended up feeling very sorry for Mr Bolestrode, because yes, he'd committed a mistake, but it wasn't such a terrible one, very early in his career, he'd been tempted. He had indulged in some financial underhand dealings. It was not so very bad. But his whole career had been built on that lie. He couldn't afford to let it be known, but eventually it was discovered, and he lost everything, his social position,

reputation, his position on so many boards of trustees of churches and Sunday schools Well, he just lost his respectability, because that one mistake was discovered. And also, he'd been a very strict and righteous man, setting himself up as a pillar of righteousness, a great support of the Church, so, he was shown up in a way as a humbug and a hypocrite, even though what he had originally done wasn't all that bad. And then, one of Oscar Wilde's plays turns on the same theme: "An Ideal Husband", because he turns out to have been not so ideal. He's now a Prime Minister, but when he was a minor Cabinet Minister, He'd sold some secret, some secret he'd learned by virtue of being a Cabinet Minister, he'd sold it to make a lot of money. That was the basis of his career and that comes [9] out. Do you see? But on the one hand there was this unfortunate situation in which in the past at least, people would have been forced almost to have a private life, because their public life was not permitted to include all of them. Unless they were so powerful as to not have to bother, like maybe Napoleon or a few others like that. But we have been left with a bit of a residue of that and people do cherish a certain private area which no one is allowed to look at. This means that you're not allowed to deal with that person as a whole. You are allowed to deal with that person as a whole. You are allowed to go so far but when you approach that particular area, that particular pocket, 'hands off' and so that means a limitation on the friendship. With some people this very private area may be a drink problem. But no one is allowed to refer to that; everyone skirts around it and the person himself maybe pretends that he hasn't got a drink problem. Even his best friends aren't allowed to touch on it. "Yes he likes a drink", but no one is really allowed to put it to him: "well look you have got a drink problem". That area "mustn't be touched". You see the sort of thing I am getting at. This is a really serious miccha ditthi, that someone's private life is their private life. And no one else, even the best friend has any right to talk to them about it. Even if the fact that they having that kind of private life is getting in the way of their overall development as an individual. "Your private life is your private life".

MIKE HOWES: You're saying that this doesn't exist in India...

S: Certainly not in this kind of way. No. People live much more in public. For instance, money. We tend to think it's just sex, but money... money is very much part of this private area for others. In India, if you meet someone and you get talking, almost the first thing you're asked is "how much do you earn?" No one thinks anything of it "How much do you earn?" "I earn so much". There's nothing private about it. But in England we feel a sort of shame asking people how much they earn or telling how much we earn. It's as though it's a dirty little secret; unless one earns so much that, well people are going to be impressed, so you casually mention it "Oh I get \$45... a year (laughter) I mean there are many wives who don't know how much their husbands earn.

RATNAKETU: There's three things I never knew about my parents. One was they never told me how old they were. They never told me who they voted for, and they never told me how much money they earned. And I still don't know.

S: The private area.

SAGARAMATI: My father never told my mother how much he earned; he told me.

S: Well, maybe that's a special case, not telling your wife how much you earn. You might be supporting some other woman. (laughter) But why shouldn't you be able to say to your wife "well look, I've got another woman, another wife. I'm married to both of you". Why should

you not be able to say that ? All live happily together (laughter) Why not? A sensible arrangement I would have thought. Why do you have to hide and conceal if that is in fact how you want to live. Don't take me to literally (laughter)

KULANANDA: It's almost as if the whole social fabric of this country is based on that miccha ditthi, which makes it paper thin. You cannot believe a thing really. There's so much concealment going on.

S: Within family... well as you say, yours is a good instance. But I remember as a boy, I knew how much my father earned. He was comparatively open about it, and things like that.

[10]

RATNAKETU: And who he voted for?

S: Oh, Labour. Oh yes very definitely. These things were well discussed in the family.

SAGARAMATI: Surely in those cases there is a reason why people hold back because they could upset the family or the person.

KULANANDA: That's tied up isn't it? The reason that people get upset is based in this desire to keep the fabric intact (agreement)

NAGABODHI: You're not afraid of upsetting someone for the pain that you cause him, so much as the repercussions of upsetting him to the fabric that you () secured.

JINAPRIYA: A certain degree of lack of openness is just built into the system and accepted.

RATNAKETU: What matters is what something looks like, not what it actually is.

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S: I think this is why so many people, especially recently the Chairmen have enjoyed telling their life stories because it meant opening up your private life, well, there's nothing private not from other Chairman, not other Order Members anyway. You are quite ready to let them walk in and take a look at every aspect of oneself and one's life.

RATNAKETU: That was one of the first things I noticed when I first moved into a community, was just how I just felt I could just walk down a corridor and be just perfectly myself. It didn't matter.

S: On the other hand we're dangerously near another miccha ditthi: "Letting it all hang out" Now what's the miccha ditthi there?

SAGARAMATI: There isn't any distinction between skilful and unskilful emotion.

S: Yes, and you're almost a right to inflict your unskilful mental states on other people.

KULANANDA: "Self expression is of paramount value"

S: Yes right.

KULANANDA: That is the basis behind a lot of modern art.

S: Yes "Whatever you experience is worth expressing".

KULANANDA: And because "it's expressed it's valued".

S: And because "it's expressed, it must be art. It must be art."

JINAPRIYA: Because "it's experience which is valuable"

KULANANDA: "any experience will do".

S: You must be pretty short of experience to value certain kinds of experience that one can think of.

JINAPRIYA: I think that is probably where it stems from actually. Because I think a lot of people are so emotionally alienated that they've got to state any sort of feeling experience.

S: A frisson.

KULANANDA: That's what shock has become such a popular artistic technique, in inverted commas.

[11]

JINAPRIYA: A lot of people only experience feeling in the face of catastrophe.

RATNAKETU: I've just thought of a miccha ditthi that, "progress or change is always for the better".

S: Yes. "Technological improvement constitutes progress and is irreversible". "Things are getting better and better all the time". I think recently people have begun to wonder about this; it was very strong a couple of generations ago.

KULANANDA: In the fifties it was very, very strong.

S: Well, for instance as it was pointed out recently in connection with the economic situation in the country that a lot of people had come to expect that wages are going to increase automatically every year, as though it was a natural law that they should do so. But of course it's by no means a natural law. And they start feeling that if wages don't go up, something has gone seriously wrong, as though a natural law has stopped working, stopped operating.

NAGABODHI: Well, the prices are going up every year; to some extent that is true.

S: But it doesn't necessarily follow that wages should follow. You have to accept that sometimes maybe whether you like it or not a decline in the standard of living. I mean people have come to expect the standard of living... everybody's standard of living will go up and up".

KULANANDA: They have a basis for believing that in as much as there a continuous increase in technological ability. Therefore there ought to be in an equitable system an increase in salary.

RATNAKETU: But that doesn't follow More and better technology... that doesn't mean a higher standard of living.

KULANANDA: In some ways it ought to. That's the promise of Technology.

NAGABODHI: This is the promise people were made by people they respected and believed in.

KULANANDA: And in some ways there's a logic to it; just that technology isn't being very intelligently handled.

S: For instance people were saying in connection with the recent Falklands crisis or War, not a subject I'd really care to discuss, but just as an illustration, that if the British Government could organize, launch that expedition so successfully, efficiently, why can't it organize the economy in the same way. So I was thinking about this. And I thought "Well it's quite simple". It's because all they had to do was use the Army, the Navy and the Air Force and how are they organized? In a strictly hierarchical way. You just obey orders. You do what you are told. Well if the economy was organized in that way, well no doubt some improvement might be made. But the government of the country is not organized in that hierarchical, almost dictatorial fashion, so how can you make that sort of comparison. If Mrs Thatcher had hundred percent power, well she'd very likely reorganize the country to almost everybody's satisfaction but the poor woman she hasn't got that power. (laughter) You see what I mean? Whereas she could say to the commanders-in-chief of the various services "do this, do that", and it was done. No argument, no discussion and apparently they all liked her for that, that they knew exactly where they stood with her, she gave her orders, and they obeyed her. Everyone was happy. But it's not like that with regard to the rest of our political life, so you cannot make that comparison. But that brings me to another miccha ditthi, which is about hierarchy, Spiritual hierarchy. Some people in the modern world don't like this [12] whole notion of hierarchy. I remember in the very early days of the FWBO, there was very strong resistance to this. Very strong resistance to the idea that one person might be better of even more evolved than another. This was very strongly resisted. That everybody was equally good, everybody was equal in fact, equally equal, which is another miccha ditthi.

RATNAKETU: I feel a sort of resistance there in that I feel that I feel reluctant to make a judgement on somebody's spiritual worth of value, just from a quite brief or superficial acquaintance ...

S: Oh yes that is quite true.

[RATNAKETU:] ... and because you're good at one thing, because you're good at working in a co-op, therefore you're spiritually advanced and because you can give a good talk on the Dharma, therefore you're spiritually advanced.

S: Well, that's another question. That would be another miccha ditthi. But this miccha ditthi is that "inherently no one is or can be spiritually superior to another of more developed than

another." I must say I have some difficulty in understanding, because I never felt that way. When I was in India originally I was only too happy if I found someone who I could feel was more spiritually developed than I was or more advanced. It gave me a great belief and confidence. But that is not, I think, the attitude of a lot of people nowadays. Of course you mustn't jump to the conclusion that someone is more advanced or spiritually developed for quite superficial reasons. You cannot really know without some real contact. I think it should never be assumed in advance. And this is the complementary point, it should never be assumed in advance that anybody is either superior or inferior. You cannot be asked to accept anyone as inferior or superior because of somebody else's judgement. You have to keep an open mind about it. You have to have your own communication with someone, enter into communication with them, without any preconceptions of superior or inferior and then as a result of your own interaction and inter-communication over a period you will start feeling this person is on the whole more developed than I am. You might start off by feeling "Well he's better working in the Co-ops", or "he's a better carpenter than I am" or "I'm a better speaker than he is." But in the end you'll get an overall feeling that actually this person is more mature than I am, more developed than I am, or less so, within the context your genuine communication. But very often you will in the end strike that balance. Sometimes it may be quite difficult because the person may be roughly on the same level, so you never come to any final decision. "Well that person is more mature than you or less". "Well you're about even, he's better at some things, you're better at others." But there are other cases where you may feel that someone is very definitely more advanced or a more developed than you are, and you should be only happy then that you have found someone to whom you can genuinely look up as a result of your personal communication. That should be a great relief and a great inspiration. Not something which makes you feel resentful. But we mustn't take our evaluations from other people. I've come up against this quite a lot. Again it comes back to criticism. "Oh you mustn't criticize the Kharmapa (?) or the Dalai Lama". Well, I only have my experience of 'these people and I have to be true to my own experience. So someone cannot say to you "Oh, you've got to personally feel moved to bow down", well, do so but nobody can demand that you do so because they see the Kharmapa in a particular way. They've no right to demand that of you at all. But that is what they do, very often. So there is such a thing as spiritual hierarchy, but it is a natural hierarchy, not necessarily - reflected in any objective social order and no one can be asked by anyone else to accept that some other person occupies a particular position in this hierarchy, whether higher or lower. You have to find it out from [13] your own experience as a result of your own communication. If from a number of people you feel are very reliable you hear that someone is spiritually very advanced, well you may be inclined to think that it is likely that it is so but you cannot be at all sure until you have your own personal experience and communication with that person. You certainly cannot affirm it as a truth unless you can do so from your own experience ... It does seem that there are a lot of sacred cows around. Quite a lot of things one is not supposed to attack, not supposed to question, not even that you're supposed to actually go along with what other people think even though you don't think it yourself or have no reason to think.

JINAPRIYA: I think that's linked in with a quite deep-rooted search for infallibility really. You don't then have to take risks of personal responsibility.

S: When I, in my earlier days in India, I tended on the whole to accept other people as more experienced and more enlightened than myself. This was my natural tendency. But sometimes it dawned on me that someone wasn't quite so advanced as I had thought. I didn't hesitate sometimes to say so, at least when I was asked. I didn't go out of my way to make the point

but if I was asked I would give an honest opinion but then people would turn around and say "Who are you to say this, who are you to criticize him?" and I said "well, who am I not? Why should I not? A cat may look at a king." But this is what they used to say. As if to say that is someone has a certain position, social or ecclesiastical he is recognized by a lot of people as such and such you mustn't go against that, you mustn't question that, you've got to actually go along with it. If they all bow down, you've got to bow down, regardless of what you think. You are not allowed to disagree or to be different. I remember people asked me my first impression of the Kharmapa, they expected me to be bowled over by his spirituality. But I said I got the impression of a quite good business man. (laughter) That was my honest impression and I met him subsequently and I has never any reason to alter that. And in the same way, there's this question of one's own feeling. We touched on this particular one recently in a study seminar. Sometimes one isn't allowed to have one's own feelings, because people want to see you in a certain way and there was an incident in a retreat once I'd had a few interviews and someone asked "well how did your interviews go?" So I said "Oh I felt quite bored". So this person, this woman said "Oh no Bhante, you couldn't have been bored". So I said "Yes, I was bored" (laughter) "Oh no, no, you could not possibly feel bored". In other words she had this idea that, well that Bhante must be in a state of unbounded ecstasy, even when he was with boring people. So I said "No". So she tried to as it were to deny that I felt bored. She went on insisting and insisting that I couldn't have felt bored. But I said "Yes, I did." As though she was trying to take away my own actual experience but I wouldn't let her. I hung on to it. But people do this and they do this when you're quite young. They tell you "You don't want that extra helping do you, darling?", or "You don't really want to go out just now, do you?". You're falsifying the child's feelings. Very often one is spoken to in this sort of way. People don't want you to have the feeling that you actually do have because they are inconsistent with their view of you.

MIKE HOWES: Parents seem to do it all the time. I've done it myself.

S: You've done it as a parent.

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MIKE HOWES: They say "I hate Mummy" and they are automatically told "No, of course you don't". Children's feelings are always tuned about.

S: It makes children and subsequently adults not knowing what their feelings really are, which is a terrible state to be in. It's in a way quite good that you like this and you don't like that. You love this and hate that. It's quite good to be clear cut about these things : "I hate rice pudding" "All right fair enough." But Mummy says " On no darling, you like it especially when Mummy makes it, it is so nice" (laughter) You see they're trying to falsify the child's feelings.

RATNAKETU: They're told "Behave yourself", when they are already.

S: Or maybe you go on solitary retreat and you come back after a month and someone says "Been on solitary, had a wonderful time, haven't you?" (mock desperate voice) "Yes I had a wonderful time" (laughter) You have to go along with it. "I had a wretched time, I really hated every minute". They feel a bit let down. Maybe their faith in solitary retreats is undermined. This is what happens. One must be true, one must be allowed to be true to one's own feelings. Especially when people ask you how you are feeling, and the when you tell them they want to

tell you that you feel something different, that is terrible.

JINAPRIYA: If you didn't know what you felt, there would be no possibility of change.

S: But children do if they're not interfered with by their parents.

NAGABODHI: I've watched my nephews and their mother and I must say they often say "Oh I can't stand that" and it's clear they're playing some game. It's a way of getting some attention. I would imagine if that sort of thing goes on a lot it must... I'd probably find myself saying "Oh shut up".

S: Yes, "they're not your true feelings".

NAGABODHI: Yeah. There's obviously a reason why they started doing that, but in defence of the mother who said "oh come on you know you like it". There's often times when that's probably true.

RATNAKETU: But what is wrong then is that the Mother is pissed off and angry, but then she is having to be all kind and friendly to them and actually underneath the kid is picking up on her anger and resentment, although she's got a smile on her face. I think it's quite good that parents should scream at their kids. If they feel that way.

S: Well, it's the lesser of two evils, perhaps. I don't think it's really a good thing but one can think of them doing worse things. This reminds me of some study which was done in the United states with children, quite young people in their teens. I think mostly coloured children who'd been thrown out by their parents. I think they were found to be in a better mental state than those who'd stayed at home. Because those who'd been thrown out knew exactly where they stood with their parents. Whereas those who were at home and this was a certain group of deprived children weren't sure where they stood because the parent spoke the language of love and affection but they picked up an underlying feeling that they would have liked to have thrown them out. They were in a much less healthy state than those who had actually been thrown out and were on the street, because they knew where they stood and their parents feelings about them were quite clear and out front, as it were. That was the conclusion they reached actually that the reason for their greater positivity was they knew what their parents feelings about them really were, [15] and there was no uncertainty on that score and adjusted accordingly. But those who stayed at home and didn't know how their parents really felt, got contrary messages, and couldn't make any satisfactory adjustment. Anyway that's by the by. Of course one mustn't be self-indulgent about feeling, certainly not about negative feelings, but yes one really does need to acknowledge one's feelings and know what one feelings are and not to have to falsify one's feelings, or to pretend to have feelings that one doesn't have, or not to have feeling that one does have. At least people should leave you alone.

SAGARAMATI: Are you saying like in the case where Nagabodhi mentioned where you see somebody saying something but your intuition tells you that underneath it all that is not the case.

S: I think you have to be very careful about this famous intuition. Otherwise, I've come across quite a few examples of this sort of thing even in the Friends. Somebody says "I know you're really angry with me. I can pick it up. No use you saying that you're not. You are angry. I

know it intuitively. I can feel it coming off you". People do sometimes talk in that way. Again an attempt to impose on you feelings that you don't actually have. So, I think we have to be very careful of making a statement to the effect that we feel or we know in some way better than the person himself how he is actually feeling.

KULANANDA: But sometimes one can have that experience.

S: Sometimes but I think one has to be very cautious about how one communicates that.

SAGARAMATI: Because the point of reference is... like myself I have faith in my own feelings rather than what somebody else says.

S: But you have to be very careful that you don't ... because you have a strong feeling you don't necessarily jump to the conclusion that that corresponds to some objective fact. Otherwise we come back to another miccha ditthi. That you feel so strongly that somebody else is angry with you that he must be angry with you, even if he refuses to acknowledge it. "If he refuses of course he's not being open with you " Do you see the sort of situation that can develop?

KULANANDA: Though the situation is not altogether clear cut, it's possible that you might be right.

S: Indeed. But I think if you do have that intuition, if it is correct if such a thing is possible, you have to be very careful how you communicate that to the other person. You should try and lead him to a realization of how he's feeling, not impose your reading of the psychological situation on him in such a way that he cannot but react or resist.

KULANANDA: Provoked to...

NAGABODHI: If it's a genuine intuition, the reason that you're picking it up intuitively is because the person isn't in touch with it, but just to lay it in them, often does them no good. In fact, it just blocks communication. I've done that often.

KULANANDA: Yes, because there must be a reason for the blockage.

S: You should help them resolve the blockage, not insist that they accept your point of view about them, when they're not experiencing the feeling which you say is there, perhaps correctly.

NAGABODHI: If you are intuiting something about somebody it's much better to ask questions.

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S: Right. Or just ask them to consider possibilities: "Do you think that such and such might be the case?" I found it quite interesting. This is a little bit by the way, but it does illustrate this point. I found it quite interesting that when we had our Tuscany reunion a couple of people mentioned that they'd got more out of the karate than anything else in Tuscany. So I thought that quite interesting because they felt quite free to make that statement. They didn't sort of feel obliged to say well that they got more out of the meditation or the study. No they

just said they got the most out of the karate. I mean they had no hesitation in being true to their own feelings. So I reflected quite favourably on the general atmosphere of the course itself and the reunion that people could say something of that sort. It's quite interesting, it's quite a point, that one doesn't feel obliged to make one's experience conform to any apparently expected pattern, scale of values etc. etc.

SAGARAMATI: That usually happens in the Reporting in... people have got into some sort of a mental pattern, so the next person feels that he's got to conform to that. And sometimes with a lot of it you feel that people are just not being themselves and not saying how they feel.

S: Well, it's like that woman insisting that I said that was not really bored. She had this idea firmly fixed in her mind that Bhante could never possibly feel bored. I think it's very healthy to be bored sometimes because it's a bit self-protective, it prevents you wasting your time. If I'm bored with somebody there must be something wrong with him or her because by nature I'm not bored with people; I find people very interesting, I like to talk to people. If they're boring I take it that there must be something wrong with them.

NAGABODHI: Not you?

S: No not me. (laughter) We couldn't have that. (laughter) No. For me to be bored, you must be boring.

NAGABODHI: But I don't think a lot of people could say that, could say what you just said and get away with it. You, maybe yes, but...

S: Well, I mightn't even get away with it but I'm right. (laughter)

NAGABODHI: If someone else said that it might be just them not putting... their communication isn't even attempting to be creative.

S: But this brings me to another point. It's not exactly a miccha ditthi but something that arose last time I was here and it's bit akin to the statement I've just made. I think it must have been at supper time and discussion turned upon reading newspapers. Do you remember that?

RATNAKETU: Yes, I was there.

S: Now see if you have remembered it or twigged it. What happened?

RATNAKETU: Was that when you were talking with Tom?

S: Yes.

RATNAKETU: I remember it. You said that you didn't recommend reading newspapers. He asked you: "You don't recommend reading newspapers?" and you said "yes" and then he said "You must admit that you read newspapers yourself even though you say that you don't".

S: Even though I say that people shouldn't. Yes.

RATNAKETU: So he said "Do as I say, [don't] do as I do"

S: So what did I say?

RATNAKETU: You said "what you had said was "Don't read newspapers. But that you do read newspapers."

S: So he said then?

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RATNAKETU: "Do as I say" meaning that "you say to do something but you don't bother to do it yourself".

S: So what did I say then? I said "That's right" (laughter) So were is the, not exactly, miccha ditthi? I heard afterwards he was quite sort of shaken by that. But then you see I realized what I was saying because when one says or refers to people saying "Don't do what I do, do what I say", you usually mean that in a quite pejorative sense. But what I was really saying was "That it is not necessarily so". There are situations in which you can actually say I was giving that as an example, "Don't do what I do, do what I say" because if you take that literally and of course I'm now treading on somewhat dangerous ground here, if you take it literally, that "you must never do anything unless you say it, or never say it unless you do it", if you take that literally on all occasions, in all circumstances, well you end up with absurdities It doesn't recognize as were any difference of circumstances of even of experience. In this particular case it was very clear. I mean why do I not recommend people to read newspapers? Well it's quite clear why? Why do I read them myself, it's quite clear why I do. So I've a perfect right to say "Don't do what I do, do what I say". I'm not afraid to use that phrase. I'm not afraid of it being misunderstood, certainly not by people in the FWBO. But maybe new people like Tom will find it quite strange to hear me saying that. But it's true, there are certain things, yes, that I do that I would advise other people not to do. Certain things that I don't do, that I would advise other people to do. Because the circumstances are different. So even though I recognize the dangers inherent in this sort of position or situation or statement, nonetheless, if I am to be completely honest I have to say well this [is] sometimes the case. But yes, in a way one is treading on dangerous ground, but you mustn't be afraid to tread on dangerous ground when necessary. It isn't really dangerous actually; well, not for some people.

NAGABODHI: You don't often express yourself in absolute terms. Absolute generalize terms. "Don't do this... "

S: No I don't. If ever I do say to anybody very definitely "I think you should do this or not do that", I think you should take it very seriously because I very rarely do that. I usually lay down general principles and leave it to people to apply them in their own way. To take whatever course they think is appropriate. But if I give any specific advice, people should take it very seriously, because I hardly ever do that. But I heard afterwards he had been a bit, at least, a bit surprised that I had said such a thing. But any way it will no doubt be cleared up in due course. So it really means one must know where one stands. This is very important, as were saying knowing where other people stand. One must be quite clear in one's own mind. Some people know that they need to live in men's communities away in the country for certain definite reasons. It doesn't mean that everybody necessarily has to do that, but they know that they need to do that, etc. It does seem that in connection with the spiritual life, if one isn't careful an enormous amount of humbug gets introduced.

RATNAKETU: What do you mean by that?

S: Well, a bit like what I was talking about just now. That one isn't supposed to say things like "don't do what I do, do what I say". Some people might think it quite a shocking, even a cynical statement. But I didn't mean it like that. I meant it quite seriously, in this particular instance. But it isn't the sort of thing I'd say from a public platform because it's almost bound to be misunderstood. I'm [18] much more likely to say what I really think over lunch or supper (pause) Have you got any miccha ditthis to contribute?

SAGARAMATI: Not really no.

S: You must have come across some.

SAGARAMATI: Well, I've come across plenty but they're all I mean there's things you can all to mind... well ... seeing the spiritual life in terms of just working on yourself, that sort of thing. Seeing it in terms of doing meditation, doing yoga, you know that sort of thing.

NAGABODHI: Can you say more?

SAGARAMATI: Well it's like what people talk about their development, they always talk about it in terms of what they're doing as if they were doing it alone with no reference to other people. They always talk about "I'm going to get on with my meditation, my study: I'm going to do this". Always doing things on their own all the time, as if they have a very limited view of the spiritual life.

S: Well, this does lead almost directly into a miccha ditthi I've noticed recently. The miccha ditthi of "attitude rather than philosophy", that is to say, people seem to think, well people justify even unskilful things in terms that it is good for their development. I've noticed quite a bit of this around lately "Oh, I think I'll go and have a holiday in Greece. I think it'd be good for my development"; "I think I'll allow myself to get a bit angry, it'll be good for my development"; "I think I'll go back to college, it'll be good for my development"; "I think I won't meditate for a while, I think that it'll be good for my development to relax a bit". Do you see what I mean? If you are not careful in the name of personal development, you can justify anything and do exactly as you please. That was good for my development, I needed to be brought up against myself, the reality of failure". Yes, another miccha ditthi. That people, yes it's connected with what we were talking about earlier on, about people refusing to write off the past as wasted, that people refuse to accept that they have failed. I mean businesses are an example. So someone maybe starts up a business and it fails. He doesn't say: "It was a failure. Why was it a failure? What was lacking? What didn't I do?" It's: "Ah well, it's a very positive thing that it's failed; it's good that I should have to experience failure. I haven't experienced failure before; so, experiencing failure contributes a lot to my personal development. So in the end, he almost congratulates himself on failure. I've seen instances of this in minutes. For instance, "the jumble sale didn't make any money, it lost money. But, it was a great experience for the people concerned". You see, this sort of compensatory thing; to my mind, it represents a refusal to face up to the fact of failure, and therefore refusal to acknowledge objective criteria.

KULANANDA: The standard on is "Well now we know more. We were doing all this wrong. Now we see that we were doing it wrong. That's the good thing. Because we were doing it

wrong, we've actually been able to see ...?

S: This may be true. It's true you learn from failure, but the fact that you acknowledge failure should not be allowed to outweigh the fact that you have failed. Because you set out to succeed. You did not set out presumably to gain a certain kind of experience. So in a way, you don't accept, you refuse to accept that you have failed. So what does that tell one about oneself? That you cannot accept the fact that you've failed? You've got a very self-indulgent attitude towards yourself ; "Everything has to be all right. You cannot ever do anything wrong."

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KULANANDA: And you start judging yourself in terms of subjective experience, not in terms of objective achievement.

S: Yes. Of course, you can go to the other extreme and judge too much in terms of external achievement; but that cannot be left out by any means, especially when that was your original goal anyway.

KULANANDA: I think it is one of the biggest bugbears of FWBO co-ops. People see things in terms of subjective experience, not in terms of what they're actually doing.

S: "It doesn't matter if you don't make any money. It doesn't matter if you don't get on well with people with whom you're working. You've learned a lot from that messy situation."

KULANANDA: Right, and they're very "full experiences" which is what counts in the end: To have experiences.

S: In other words, since there is no objective criteria at all, well in the end you don't make any progress, where everything is OK., failure is OK ... any experience will do, any old experience will do, whether it's better or worse, skilful or unskilful, any old experience will do.

RATNAKETU: It's all helping to reinforce the fact of being one step removed from objective reality. And I think it is a reality that you have failed but if you don't accept that then you're not even living in a real world.

S: Sure, you're living in a dream world. This is one-sided subjectivism one might say; "It's just as good not to be able to meditate as to meditate; well, look at what you learn about yourself", etc. I mean people apply this to marriage and relationships "It's really good to have a bad relationship. You should not terminate it because look at all the things you're learning from it about yourself". So, it's an inability to face up to the fact of waste and failure, negative aspects on one's own life and one's own self. "You won't accept that you have failed". Maybe it's your pride. You have to turn every sort of failure into some kind of success. You are not strong enough to accept failure. Or that you made a mess of things or that you wasted a year. You're not strong enough to accept that. Everything has to [be] made all right.

RATNAKETU: Why is that? Why do we have such a frantic desire to make everything OK?

S: You want to think of yourself as OK. and that nothing you have done can be wrong.

Though I think it probably goes deeper than that. It's worse than that.

RATNAKETU: It's something like, you're just afraid of living in an objective world. Just afraid of admitting to the world and that things fail and there's old age, disease, death and there's pain.

S: Right, yes; you're going to get old, despite all your extra make up and face-lifts and all the rest of it. You're going to get old. And you're going to look pretty horrible, if you're not careful, after a few years.

JINAPRIYA: But I don't think it's just that, think a lot of people are sort of programmed themselves unless they are one hundred percent successful they cannot maintain any self-respect. Well, somehow they have to hide the fact from themselves that they've failed because they cannot maintain self-respect. It's like a very tight rigid overperfected ...

S: Sometimes, it seems that people cannot accept any failure. Not that [20] they cannot accept one hundred percent failure, [they] cannot accept any failure at all. Everything, with some people apparently, has to be a sort of success, or a sort of gain.

RATNAKETU: Even if you go to a movie and it's a really awful movie, you've got to find something that will make it worthwhile going to see; you have to know why it was worthwhile making the effort.

S: Maybe you're so poor, you cannot afford to waste anything, or to admit that something has been wasted.

SAGARAMATI: Is this a human condition, do you think? A Western phenomena? Did you find this in India?

S: I cannot say that I was aware of those sort of things there of liking for them. Perhaps they do exist there, or I've certainly been aware of them here, more in the FWBO. Perhaps in the FWBO, one sees a more acute clearer form of what does exist outside in a widespread way.

JINAPRIYA: I also think that it's just a misunderstanding; that, they think that they're trying to be positive.

S: Ah, yes.

MIKE HOWES: There seems to be evidence that there is a greater objectivity in the businesses and co-ops, perhaps with experience they've learnt that is possible.

KULANANDA: I think one of the problems is that we deal with values that are not instantly tangible. Like you cannot grasp, package positivity and this leaves people a lot of room for rationalization. A business succeeds or fails. In terms of your own spiritual life it is much less obvious.

S: That is true.

KULANANDA: You don't have actual games and that leaves people with a lot of room for

rationalization.

SAGARAMATI: It's also because the end of goal isn't very clear.

S: Right. Though actually you can see quite clearly the changes in people, certainly over the years, and even sometimes over the months. You can see people becoming more positive. You can even, one could go so far as to say, in some cases you can see them growing.

RATNAKETU: There is another danger there that you make your goal so far ahead, and so grandiose, that nobody can measure you at all, and you cannot even measure yourself. And years can go by and because you haven't reached the goal, that doesn't matter because you're heading for Ultimate Reality.

S: Well, you cannot be nearer to infinity. (laughter) However much progress a man makes he cannot be closer to infinity.

RATNAKETU: If you did make smaller things like "In three years time I want to give up this or start doing that"...

S: Yes, Meditate every day or...

END OF TAPE 1

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S: They insist on a hundred thousand of this and a hundred thousand of that. They don't say "Oh well, you should have that feeling of going for refuge." They say "no, you've got to do the prostration practice and going for refuge practice, a hundred thousand times! That's [a] very definite, tangible goal. Maybe you can think too literally in those sort of terms, but it does help.

JINAPRIYA: The bout system in karate I've found you can be like that. You know when you take on grading you've got to know a certain amount of stock things, be able to do certain things, and I know I can go up to a brown belt and I'll be able to learn something from him. And you can feel yourself progressing tangibly, if you like.

S: Well, the same sort of question arises with regard to people's readiness for ordination. In some ways it's difficult ultimately to apply objective criteria or at least apparently objective criteria because it is so much a question of inner attitude. On the [other] hand inner attitude must find some kind of objective expression. If you find that someone doesn't meditate, doesn't study the Dharma, they've got a drink problem, but at the same time they claim to be committed, well one may have reservations about that. On the hand, we know that people can do all the apparently right things, but still not really be committed. I mean nowadays, personally I sort of apply a different sort of criteria. I ask myself of certain people who have asked for ordination, I close my eyes and I think of the Order and I say to myself "Can I really imagine that person there in the midst of the Order." And it's very clear then: Yes or No. Do you see what I mean? You can see whether they belong or whether they don't belong.

SAGARAMATI: Going back, say working in a Co-op, you've got your spiritual development and then you've got objective criteria like earning money and success. Is there a definite one

to one relationship between them both or could you have that you're objectively not doing so very well and at the same time spiritually people are progressing or vice-versa. Business-wise you're succeeding but people are just getting right down and negative.

S: Well, you have to give due weight to the objective and the subjective. I think the point that has been made is that people allow the subjective entirely to outweigh and even to negate the objective.

RATNAKETU: And it depends what your aims were. If you set up a business and at the start you said "We don't intend to make any money. We want to just to things that good for us." Then it doesn't matter if you don't make any money. But if you start up a business and say "We're doing this because we want to make some money". And then you don't, well then, you can hardly say "it's OK. because it's good for your growth."

S: Yes right, you just haven't been consistent.

MIKE HOWES: Surely though to some extent, judgement is not only based on achieving objectives, but what those objectives [are] you've set in the first [place]. So you say for example this business is not to make money, then maybe that is, I'm not saying it is, but maybe that is a bad foundation for setting an objective. Because, anyone can achieve not making money.

RATNAKETU: But it might not be a "business" but some sort of activity like you might decide to run a centre, classes, and you can say "well we're going to do Sunday classes and we're not going to charge any money, because we're trying to get to people who don't like being charged money". If the class doesn't make any money, you've already decided that you didn't want to make any money anyway, so that's all right.

[22]

S: Yes one objective has been sacrificed so to speak to another. That is to say, getting people along and keeping them happy.

MIKE HOWES: I think my point was slightly different in that say at a Sunday class you do not want to make any money but you say want 30 people to pass through and it seems that some objectives combine. So you don't make any money and no one new passes through...

RATNAKETU: But you say "We're not worried if we don't make any money but we want 50 people a week" and you make your aims really clear.

S: Otherwise it's like the Fox and the sour grapes in Aesop's Fables The fox saw there were grapes high up on the tree and he was leaping up trying to catch hold of them and pull them down, so that he could eat them . And he didn't succeed. So in the end he said "Oh we'll expect that they are sour anyway". So it's like that. You set out to make money, in say a business, and you don't succeed. But the you say "Ah well it wasn't probably a good thing to make money anyway. Failure is better than (?) ; like sour grapes. But of course when you set up a co-op you've got at least three objectives. So the total performance, or total success of the co-op has to be judged in the light of those objectives. At least one of which is, as it were, subjective. That is to say the state of mind in which you find yourself at the end of the day as the individual co-op worker. So even if the co-op has been successful as a business and has

made money, but you don't find yourself in a very positive state at the end of the day or end of the week or end of the month, well, the objectives of the co-op as originally set have not been completely achieved. So the subjective in a sense can also constitute part of the objective criterion. You see what I mean?

RATNAKETU: You've just got to be careful again with your words like 'positive'. I know that at the end of the day's work I feel really tired and I don't really feel like doing much, but I know that I'm in a really positive state.

S: Yes positive doesn't necessarily mean that you are bouncing up and down and feel really blissful, not necessarily. It can be like that sometimes.

SAGARAMATI: Can you say something about the difference between a principle and a high degree of generalization. Say like with Sunyata you have the principle of Sunyata, it's applicable universally and at the same time people can come to the view that "everything is all one" through that medium. So what's the difference between just a high degree of generalization and a spiritual principle?

S: Well, I think generality is abstract, whereas principle is concrete.

SAGARAMATI: Concrete meaning we should experience it or it's possible to experience it.

S: Possible to apply it as a principle of application, whereas a generalization is not necessarily so. A principle calls for action, calls for application, a generalization doesn't necessarily do so.

SAGARAMATI: Because I feel the thing about "it's all one" which is so common tends to be a generalization rather than anything to do with principle. They switch, they use sometimes Sunyata or everything is bliss of whatever which is a generalization. They seem to use that as a principle for action.

[23]

S: Well sometimes it is said that one is a principle. So as you try to apply the principle of oneness, you end up in absurdities because you would have to behave in exactly the same way on all occasions towards all people. If actually everybody is one, if everything is one.

KULANANDA: In that sense your behaviour is impossible.

S: Or you become impossible... because it's all one. No question of not applying because it's all one. No question of right or wrong, it's all one.

JINAPRIYA: It isn't generally meant in a philosophical sense. It's usually saying that all religious traditions are equally valid.

S: Sometimes it does appear in a metaphysical or ontological form, that existence is one. This is the popular interpretation of the Vedanta. Or even sometimes I'm afraid of Sunyata.

SAGARAMATI: It's very difficult to deal with.

S: One gets a lot of this in India with Pseudo-(advytic ?)- Vedantics "All is one: all distinctions are illegitimate". For instance someone will say, this is the sort of conversation I've had with people in India: "Everything is One. It's all one, all people are One; all the nationalities, all the religions, all the castes, they are all One". That is what he says. Then I say "Well, in that case why do you as a Brahmin treat someone as untouchable? "Who says that I treat him as untouchable? I realize my oneness with him; so, even what you see as my treating of him as an untouchable is not a treating of [him] as a untouchable because I realize my oneness with him". This is the sort of attitude they adopt.

NAGABODHI: And he does in fact treat him like an untouchable?

S: Yes he does, but he says "Well this is what you see; my realization is of oneness".

RATNAKETU: There's that thing that you can do something and be feeling or experiencing something else completely like you can treat somebody as... kill somebody, but it's all universal, it's all one, song bird stuff ...

S: Miccha ditthis are very strong and prevalent in India among Hindu much more blatant and much more articulate much more unashamed. You can meet extraordinary outrageous miccha ditthis of this type. People are willing to talk about such things, in a way that they wouldn't in the West certainly not in this country. But it all calls for just clearer thinking, more honest thinking, more honest feeling. And it's as though there is this sort of almost conspiracy by which one is surrounded to force one to think other than clearly; to force one to feel other than honestly and force one to be less authentic.

KULANANDA: It's like a ball of string really. There's no one basis I think () to pursue them intimately until we even go ...

S: Yes one sort fades into another, merges into another.

KULANANDA: It's not as if you can plumb down deeper into them, and say well it's god because god it's because of something else and ...

S: Oh yes, another: that, "you're more of an individual if you don't join a group." For instance "don't become a Mitra". This one has arisen recently. People have, at least two, who are involved with the FWBO have expressed their reluctance to become a Mitra, even though they want to be fully involved, because becoming a Mitra would be joining a group. Yeah? So where is the miccha ditthi here?

[24]

VAJRACITTA: Well, Mitras form a group, sort of thing?

S: Well in a way they do.

KULANANDA: That you can define individuality in terms of the group rather than in terms of the individual.

S: Yes.

SAGARAMATI: Being in a group has got no part of being an individual or becoming an individual; being individual has no part of you becoming an individual.

S: Yes, has no part to play in the total process of you're becoming an individual.

RATNAKETU: Or just because you're not a signed up member of a group, an official recognized group, that that means you aren't a member of a group. That is what they think. But you may well be, but you may not know which one it is ...

JINAPRIYA: It's saying that you are an individual already.

S: But this is an example of pseudo-liberalism. It looks very broad-minded. You don't want to be identified with a group. You're an individual. It seems as though you're adopting a very noble stance. But that isn't really the case.

KULANANDA: You're just part of the group of people who don't want to join the group.

NAGABODHI: Because in fact you'd be ashamed to tell your friends that you'd joined a group (laughter).

S: Especially your liberal minded friends.

RATNAKETU: There is another one like that. "You don't want to become a Buddhist because Buddhism is just another form of conditioning".

S: It's another label, you don't want to label yourself : "What did you say your name was?"

KULANANDA: "I am one of those people who doesn't like to label myself."

S: That is also connected with this question of role. You find this a bit in connection with feminism. That "a woman should give up the role of being a mother", as if to say being a mother is not a thing, it's not something you are because you've got a child; it's just a role. You see what I mean? But the way we use this expression role is very misleading because obviously the image derives from the stage. Where yes, someone isn't a King, isn't a clown, it's just the role he adopts for the purpose of the performance. So in the same way people speak about your different functions in life. Your role as an employer, your role as a wife. But that isn't a role, that is what you are, at least with a part of yourself, so to speak. It's not "being an employer", is not a role that you are playing like actor on a stage, you are an employer, that is the actual relationship you have with other people.

JINAPRIYA: At the root of that, there is some abstract 'I' apart from the actual actions taking place.

S: Indeed. Or the actual concrete relationships and functions.

NAGABODHI: It does link up a bit with the private life thing.

S: And then even some feminists to get at them a bit "the role of the woman". A woman is just regarded as a role, as though you as an individual could be detached from the fact that

you are a woman or from the fact that you are a man. And that is only your role. And [25] they speak of social roles: "we've got to get rid of sexual roles."

RATNAKETU: Isn't there a case that there are people who are in roles that are different from themselves ...?

S: But what does one mean by that?

KULANANDA: Machismo which [one] could say was a sexual role.

S: I would[n't] regard that as a role, that's more like a style of behaviour.

RATNAKETU: Well like when that lady was telling you that you weren't bored she was putting you in a role. She was giving you a role.

S: I wouldn't use the word role here. She was expecting a certain kind of behaviour. A role suggests a sort of total function as a member of society.

RATNAKETU: I think what the feminists are saying is that when they say that the "woman is a role" is that everybody else has forced them to act in a certain way.

S: I think they say more than that. The fact of being a woman is itself a role. You can say that women behave in a particular way. It might be a role in that sense but not the fact that they are women.

NAGABODHI: I've never heard that. The most common use of the term role in the respect of the sexes is roles in the home, who goes out and gets a job, who does the washing up, who looks after the children?

S: Well there's some feminist literature which I've read which regards motherhood as a role. How can motherhood be a role? It's a definite concrete function. You cannot sort of abstract yourself if you have a child from the fact that you have a child and say "well that is not really part of me, not really me. That is only my role, that I have a child and I am a mother". How can that be a role? To think of it as a role is a form of alienation I would say. For instance supposing someone was to say to me "Well my role is say the 'Head of the Western Buddhist Order' ". I don't regard it as a role. This is what I am. This is what I put myself into fully. It's not a role. Though somebody else might see it in that way. If I felt it as a role, it would mean I was alienated from it. This what I am. This is what I'm doing. This is how I am functioning.

RATNAKETU: A lot of people are alienated and so you might get say some situation where a man is in a role. He's alienated and he sees himself in a role. And I think it could be to his advantage to change his role just ...

S: Well that suggests that you can change. But if you've got a child you cannot not be a mother for instance. It's not a role because you cannot change it. You could say that a role is what you can change. What you cannot change isn't a role.

RUCHIRAKETU: When one is talking about a mother one isn't a king about the biological fact that so and so gave birth to that child, what one is talking about is a certain set of

behaviour towards the child.

S: But then there has to be specific behaviour which is nurture etc. But the feminist would say that this whole business of nurture is something imposed on them. That is just her role, in the superficial sense.

KULANANDA: There is a certain degree of imposition in our social structure. But they take it too far.

SAGARAMATI: There is a view of individuality there that is something [26] private, something you retreat into, but you label, say anything about it, it's totally ... It cannot be got at.

S: Well in some ways you're most individual when you're interacting with other people. Not just when you are on your own and quiet, in a way. I don't say you cannot be an individual when you are on your own and quiet. You certainly can, but you can certainly experience yourself as an individual fairly intensely and powerfully when interacting with others.

SAGARAMATI: There is the view that you can only really be yourself if you are on your own. I've heard that ...

S: Well I would say that was the case only if or to the extent that in relation to others you were completely passive, which you should not be. To be yours if as an individual means to be active. I do not mean active in a crude, gross sense. But in a sense of creative almost. When you interact with others you're not just letting them have an effect upon you or have an influence on you.

KULANANDA: Something I read recently which was quite interesting. Lawrence Durrell writing, slightly autobiographically, saying he'd never experienced his individuality so much as when he was merely observing in a bus or in a restaurant, as a novelist.

S: One can experience one's individuality in that way, but then again you can experience it very intensely in much more active situations where you are having an effect on other people. I think one cannot rule that out.

NAGABODHI: I don't know but perhaps it's possible that when some writers say that, I don't know about Lawrence Durrell, they are talking euphemistically and implying their loneliness.

S: Well they have very confused ideas about individuality as such anyway.

KULANANDA: I think you can know what he means. You can sit on a bus or in a crowded restaurant or in a pub and experience what is happening around you.

NAGABODHI: But then you're experiencing that, you're not necessarily experiencing your own individuality.

KULANANDA: You are to an extent experiencing your separateness from them.

S: Your distinction at least from them.

KULANANDA: Right. You're not a part of the group.

S: I remember in the early days of the Friends, I did this for some reason or other quite a lot. I used to, I was living up at Muswell Hill, go down to Camden Town and places like that and that time I used to take Guinness for the good of my health (laughter). I used to just sit, lunch-time usually, and have Guinness in these very scruffy pubs where lots of Irish people used to go and it was quite interesting in a way to just observe people, to watch them. I used to enjoy it. I think it must of been because at that time I was thinking a lot about individuality and all that sort of thing and giving a series of talks on them. But this is interesting in connection with some of the things that we have been saying recently because if at that time, I'd told Order Members and Friends and others, that is how I passed some of my time they would have been deeply shocked. But now nobody is shocked and at most they're just mildly interested. So that measures some degree of change and even progress in the Movement it's that it becomes possible even to speak about such things which it wasn't at one time.

[27]

NAGABODHI: The sign that a Spiritual Movement is healthy is when the Guru can go out and have a quiet Guinness occasionally (laughter)

S: No, it's healthy when he can have gone out and had a quiet Guinness ten years earlier (laughter)

NAGABODHI: I see ... so we'll have to watch you very carefully.

S: Heavenly only know what I'll be confessing in ten years time. (laughter) If I am still around. I cannot even think what there might be to confess but no doubt something will be discovered. (laughter) I think there are very few societies, very few communities in which anybody can be completely open. I think, I mean without indulging in complacency that the FWBO as a whole is much more open than any other group to use that term that I know of or have heard of in Britain certainly.

NAGABODHI: I think it's something we take for granted.

S: There's a lot more genuine tolerance of one another and therefore genuine freedom. Another miccha ditthi: that when you call to attention something unskilful that somebody has done and if for instance that fact of doing that is generally accepted as being unskilful and its generally accepted that something else is skilful and you point out to someone that they're doing something unskilful not something which is skilful, you're then accused of expecting them to "tow the party line". I find this really tiresome. You know the sort of thing I mean? Again this is pseudo-liberalism, as though they are the great individual and you are the one who is negating their individuality expecting them, they being a free rebellious spirit, to accept group norms. When you are simply pointing out to them that they've done something which they should not have done because it was unskilful and they themselves even recognize it is unskilful. But then one is accused of "expecting them to tow the party line". For instance if someone is unpunctual, keeps other people waiting and you say "you should have turned up on time". Well: "Punctuality, it's the party line". "Everyone should be punctual." "I don't want to follow the party line, I want to be an individual". Or "communities are the part line". A principle is degraded by being termed a party line. I don't know why people do this. Well in a general way I do; I think there's more to it than that.

NAGABODHI: It might be because the principle is being abused.

S: But then you don't react like that.

KULANANDA: Right, then you try to reinstate the principle as Principle's.

S: For instance I have heard used the expression "The FWBO party line" for anything that is accepted as valid by the greater number of people within the FWBO. To refer to it as a party line shows in a way great contempt for that particular principle and for the people who observe and practise it. As though they are just a lot of sheep, blindly following a party line. So I think one should be very careful how one uses these sort of derogatory expressions.

KULANANDA: One can come across people who it's quite clear that is in fact what is going on and merely accepting a principle blindly.

S: But there is no party line because there is no party. You're not only seeing the spiritual community as a group, you are even seeing the group as some kind of political party.

KULANANDA: One could argue that most groups have ...

[28]

S: Well a group has a quantum of power. And to possess power is to be a political entity. But there's nothing wrong with possessing power. The power is not to be confused with live (?), to use that terminology, but one always has power. One has physical power, one has emotional power, mental power, social power, political power, Even your wretched miserable little vote, insignificant as it is presents a certain quantum of power at your disposal every four to five years. So one cannot abdicate power, one had power in as much as one is a member of a group.

KULANANDA: I'm thinking also in terms of the internal dynamics of the group, political aspect that there are people in the group who are more powerful than others.

S: What one shouldn't do is to act as it were politically when you should be acting spiritually. You shouldn't invoke power when power is not appropriate, which means especially within the Order. Within the Order there should be no place for power whatever. Power should not be used under any circumstances to the extent that power is used it is no longer the Order. Or to the extent that power is used within a spiritual community to that extent it is not fully a spiritual community

KULANANDA: Politics must be replaced by openness.

S: Much more than that. Openness is one of the conditions of functioning in the so to speak love mode rather than the power mode. But the power mode is not necessarily wrong. If someone owes you money and you take him to court, your Co-op takes him to court, you are functioning in accord with the power mode, but there is nothing wrong in that. But if you took an Order Member to court because he owed you some money then that would be a breach of the spiritual relationship. Even if he did owe you money, well you should deal with the situation other than by invoking the power of the group.

SAGARAMATI: Don't lend money to Order Members.

KULANANDA: At the same time I've noticed in the FWBO people have a tendency not to formalize and as it were legitimise certain relationships. Like ... a centre has a lease on a house, say let's another community use it and then that community changes and suddenly you wonder who is responsible, what is happening ...

S: Everything is messy; that should always be rectified.

KULANANDA: To some extent you have to operate within the terms of the power mode.

S: But even when you do that if when you have another hat on you're a spiritual community you have to operate the power so as to subserve those more ultimate spiritual objectives. That is a tricky thing and again one must be beware of self-deception. One may sometimes decide to give up one's rights as it were within the group and not to operate through the power mode even though you are morally and legally entitled to in the wider or ultimate interests of the spiritual community maintaining the love mode as your mode of operation. Sometimes by operating with the power mode you not only do things to other people, you do things to yourself and you must be very careful of that.

KULANANDA: I think where the big problem comes is, there are certain standard of efficiency which are appropriate to an operation in the power mode which cannot be achieved with the same swiftness in the context of the love mode. In the power mode someone isn't shaping up in a business for example, you can fire them and that is that and you don't tolerate inefficiency.

[29]

S: You cannot even fire them nowadays.

KULANANDA: You can if you're sneaky, but in the love mode its a lot more difficult.

S: But then you take people on in that way into that sort of situation, you have to consider that and whether they are suitable material for that sort of treatment of whether it's going to be totally unrewarding and will leave you in the end feeling frustrated, resentful and angry which is even worse. Better just to fire him.

SAGARAMATI: I think I've got another ... Somebody said "Buddhism, what does it do for the have-nots?"

S: Well we do a very great deal or try to do a very great deal for those that have not Buddhism.

SAGARAMATI: This person was a Marxist.

S: Well I think one has to say quite frankly as do the Christians 'man does not live by bread alone'. And even in Marxist societies bread is sometimes pretty short. They have to import it from the Capitalist countries. Literally. So when they say "What are you doing for the have-nots?" Well we are supporting the shifting of American grain to Russia. You can answer in that way (laughter) Or else you can give some completely absurd answer; "WE PAY"

(laughter) Also I did make the statement recently take this with a pinch of salt I forget the context somebody put to me how should we treat such and such questions and I said well if people ask you those sorts of questions you can just be rude to them, or you can just treat it as a joke. You're not bound to treat foolish questions seriously. Why should you? It's a foolish question. Don't treat it seriously. You would be a fool to treat it seriously. And that sort of question is rather like that "What are you doing for the have nots?" "Well, "What are YOU doing ?" "You tell me that first." "Oh, I'm selling copies of 'Watch Tower'". "Well how does that help the have nots?" "I'm in favour of the revolution" "How does that help the have nots?" "Have you ever seen a have not?" Why should one take these foolish questions seriously or lying down as it were. One should have sufficient courage and boldness to treat them almost with the contempt that they deserve. Certainly not with seriousness. Just raise your eye-brows.

SAGARAMATI: I think what I said was the have-gots and the have-nots are all equally greedy but the have-gots have got better at getting it than the have-nots (laughter)

S: That's pretty foolish. But again hum-bug. Hum-bug. There is Marxist hum-bug as well as religious hum-bug. It's much the same.

RUCHIRAKETU: Yeah, but don't you really have to deal with the objective question, because it might not be hum-bug. I mean the person might seriously want to know "what are you doing for the have-nots"

S: I would say that if someone uses that sort of phraseology so stereotyped, so jargon-ridden it's very unlikely that they will have a serious point or feel it really seriously. If they do by any chance well yes you must take it seriously. But anyone using that sort of jargon in a way puts himself out of court immediately. It's like someone asking "what are doing for our poor deprived brothers?", well the way in which it is asked, you can tell what sort of content is there. If someone is really concerned about that sort of question, well you can tell that. If they're really concerned, really worried and really want to know what Buddhism is doing to about the material sufferings of people, say in India, amongst the Untouchables, well [30] then you can take that seriously. If they are serious, but I don't think you are under any obligation to be serious when fundamentally they are not. Or they are clearly asking the question in a hecilin (?) sort of way. It's not an honest question, it doesn't deserve an honest answer. Well if you laugh at it or are rude back, that's honest. That's how you feel about it "It's ridiculous, it's absurd". You cannot take that question seriously or that person seriously.

KULANANDA: There are so many people one cannot take seriously around. All the Marxists with a car ...

S: Hampstead Marxists. How can one take them seriously? Not to speak of Hampstead Buddhists. I cannot take them seriously either - really. Why should you be obliged to play with them, to go along with people's little games. Why should you be obliged to play with the game that they are serious about the sufferings of the world or about Buddhism or whatever: why should you? If you meet them at a party fair enough. But if they come along to the centre to try to interview you or the radio or TV, why should you not speak your mind? And why should you have to pretend that they are serious when you know jolly well that they are not. Why should you have to suffer fools gladly? I think we need in a way a little more friendly militancy; as a form of fierce friendship you could say. Otherwise one ends up not being able

to speak the truth ever to anybody under any circumstances. One is always surrounded by hum-bug and flummery and such like. I mean sometimes I used to be asked questions in India like this : "I'm sure that someone of your universal and tolerant outlook will agree that ..."
(laughter) This is exactly the way in which things used to be put to me sometimes. So why should one go along with it? So I think a little more lion roaring is in order. But of course be careful how you do it. You must be able to. You may catch a Tartar sometimes, someone who is better at repartee than you, or able to be ruder than you. You have to be very careful about that, otherwise you can be left just looking foolish. So don't try to be too clever if you are not too sure of your ground.

NAGABODHI: You need to be sure of your ground.

S: Very confident within yourself.

RATNAKETU: What I feel with those sort of questions is that I'm a better Christian than most Christians are and a better Marxist than most Marxists. I'm a better revolutionary: I get up every morning ... and I lead a better ethical life than any Christian on the planet (laughter) well most ...

S: You're doing much more for society than Marxist from Brezhnev downwards.

RATNAKETU: I've given up the possibility of wife and children. I've given up a home, family, cars, position for the revolution.

S: Right. A lot of people have got those things by working for the revolution.

NAGABODHI: Even the possibility?

RATNAKETU: Yeah. (Roar of laughter)

S: All his boats and bridges are behind him. You're not going back to New Zealand then?

RATNAKETU: I'm not going back to New Zealand. I may be going there.

S: Rediscover it like Captain Cook ... But if miccha ditthi implies confused thinking there is so many pressure on one to think confusedly and do not permit one to think clearly or to have one's own emotion.

[31]

NAGABODHI: Sometimes you can be at a class or a dinner party or something, people outside of the Movement, and you can feel them coming at you thick and fast.

S: Oh they put pressures on you all the time. I used to feel this very strongly when I was taking beginners classes, even when I was taking some of you, ten or twelve years ago. A sort of pressure of other people on you ...

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... crammed into a little narrow space.

NAGABODHI: Which is what it really is: narrow vision.

S: Right, it's not so much that it's wrong. It's narrow, it's limited. It's confined. It's like being asked whether you vote Conservative or Labour on the assumption that you must vote for the one or the other. It's impossible that you should not give your vote to one or the other. Well what can you say? One can only say what Shakespeare says "A plague on both your houses" I find it sometimes quite difficult to get into conversation with people outside the Friends, there's so many unshared assumptions that are [on] both sides.

KULANANDA: I noticed that when I was meeting people when I was abroad recently. If you're going along with a group, the moment you start talking if you were in touch with yourself you come across very definitely separate, and it actually had quite a shaking effect on the structure of the group that you were with. A large complacency as long as you were silent, but once you opened your mouth you couldn't but stand apart. It was inevitable.

SAGARAMATI: I think it is fatal to talk to more than one person. I find in Dundee that one person I can talk to is good, if there are two from the past ...

S: Well some people find it with their parents. Some people have told me if they get hold of their mother by herself or their father by himself they can talk to them, but if they're both together it's quite impossible. They sort of reinforce each other, their mutual assumptions. If you have got three relations, you might as well give up three relations in the same room, very often. But you can tackle them one by one usually starting with the weakest member of the group, which means the one who is more of an individual. Anyway that's enough ...

FIN

Spellchecked and put into house style Shantavira
November 1998