

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

1978 Order Convention Questions and Answers - Visualisation

Tape 1 Side 1

Subhuti: Tonight Bhante is going answer a great stack of questions in a question and answer period.

Sangharakshita: Have a good look at them first. I think I'll stand up. A few of you might have wondered why I wanted the questions written down. Well, there are three quite good reasons for that. First of all to get you to do most of your own thinking for yourselves because if you formulate your question clearly it's already half answered and only too often people don't even bother to formulate their questions clearly and that happens especially if you get up on your feet and start stammering out the question. If you work on it and write it down it's much clearer and maybe once you've got it down you won't even ask it because the answer will also be there. Secondly, if the questions are the written form then I can read them out first into the microphone and in that way they get played on to the tape otherwise it's very difficult to tape-record questions of people speaking from the different parts of the room. And of course if you get people speaking from different parts of the room asking questions sometimes there's a little confusion, even with Order Members. So let's see what we do have. I did notice - those questions I have received earlier on - that quite a few of them relate to practise, especially meditation practice, visualisation practice which is a good thing. Well let's start of then with something very simple perhaps. Yes. Here's one. This is very simple. Not all the questions are very simple I suspect. But this one says:

"The word visualisation has a meaning to everyone of us in the Order. What in your own words, as it were, is the meaning (Loud Laughter), is the meaning for you?"

Well, visualisation, visualisation means making to be seen. You visualise. You create something in visual terms before or in front of your own inner vision in your own, as it were, inner space. In that inner space through your creative imagination, or with the help of your creative imagination, you build up either little by little or all at once, or if you're especially good at it, I was going to say a picture, but that isn't really quite the right word. It's more like an image or, if you like, an icon of a buddha or a bodhisattva, even a daka, dakini, dharmapala, and this is what visualisation means to me. In technical terms this is what is called the samaya sattva. Samaya means 'conventional'. It's the conventional form buddha or bodhisattva which you, as it were, build up out of your, again as it were, own mind stuff. When you, as it were, stretch out a bit of yourself, a part of yourself, part of your own mindstuff, stretch it out and mould it into a buddha or bodhisattva form and see that in front of you as vividly as you see another person. Well, that is the samaya sattva. The conventional visualised form.

But there's a stage further than that to which also the term visualisation applies. We're all familiar with the idea that enlightenment has so many different aspects. We're familiar with the idea that those different aspects can be again, as it were, personified by different buddhas and bodhisattvas and so on. So your samaya sattva, your conventional visualised form acts as a sort of basis for the descent or the manifestation of what we may describe as the - there's really no word for it in English - sort of transcendental cum archetypal form which is an aspect of enlightenment or buddhahood itself. The two are, as it were, in correspondence or alignment. And when you build up that form in

your own mind, or with your own mindstuff, since it has a sort of analogical relationship with the aspect of enlightenment to which it pertains, that aspect of enlightenment can again, as it were, descend into or manifest through it and then through that samaya sattva you're in touch or in contact with what is called the Jnana Sattva which means the 'awareness being'.

So through the conventional visualised being, visualised by your own mental creative imagination you come into contact with the Jnana Sattva which is actually an aspect, you could even say, of the Absolute. So this very broadly speaking is what the word visualisation means to me which is again broadly and roughly speaking the traditional signification of the term. Perhaps it's not possible to say anything more than that in just a few words again it would really need a whole lecture.

"Would you please tell us more about your teacher Dhardo Rimpoche"?

Well, there is a connection between this question and the previous one, because it was from Dhardo Rimpoche that I did receive a number of visualisation practices, especially the White Tara practice. I don't know that anybody has this actually. It's a quite lengthy complex practice which has been fully translated. I do have the full text translated. This was the last thing I did in India before I left. I was going along to Dhardo Rimpoche for several weeks, almost every day, we were working on this text. So I've got it all in English but so far this hasn't been actually imparted to anybody. It is though quite an important practice.

Well a few words about Dhardo Rimpoche which I may say I speak with pleasure. Dhardo Rimpoche is a Tibetan incarnate lama. He's not really strictly speaking Tibetan. He's known as a Tibetan lama. He was educated as a Tibetan lama in one of the three great monastic universities of Lhasa but actually he's mainly Chinese. His father was pure Chinese and his mother was partly Chinese. He only has a little Tibetan blood in him actually though that probably rather strong. And he comes from a place, he was born in a place called Dhartsendo which is sort of in between Tibet and China, though now of course part of China though the writ of Lhasa didn't exactly run there, neither did that of that of the Chinese government there were all sorts of little local kingdoms, principalities, now of course broken up. It's now all ruled by China. So he was born in Dhartsendo of merchant parents, his parents were engaged in trade. His mother, by-the-way, I did know as quite an old lady, she lived with him in Kalimpong and she became a nun. She had rather a hot temper I'm sorry to say. She's was always getting into scrapes and caused Rimpoche no end of trouble sometimes. That's another story. [Laughter] But anyway he was identified as an incarnate lama, to use that term, as a Tulku, when he was about four and he was taken away to Lhasa a few years later to be educated. There's a story which I heard from Rimpoche himself about recollections of previous lives. I'm just pausing mainly to think because I've not thought about these things for quite a few years, it's about fifteen, sixteen years since I actually heard them. Rimpoche told me I think more than once that up to the age of seven he remembered his previous lives, at least some of them and in particular his last one, but that when he was seven or eight the memory of all these things started fading away and that he remembered remembering but that he could not directly remember any more. He just remembered remembering, and he told me one particular instance. He said that when he was very small, maybe five or six after he'd been identified as an incarnate lama but while he was still at home, a very devoted lady of the locality used to come and see him and she kept pressing him - he was, as I said, only five or six then - to accept an invitation to her house for a formal food offering, a dana and he always refused. So the lady became a bit upset and she said - I'm just trying to remember the exact details, exactly as it was told to me - but she said something like "Oh Rimpoche, how is it that you don't like to come to my house?" And he said to her "Why should I not

come to your house, after all I've been there many times before". And she had been the devoted disciple of his predecessor in incarnations who had actually had food at her house many, many a time. And he said this is what he said. He did remember going there but she had as it were been speaking to him as he was just now, that he had never been there before which in that body he hadn't. So when he said 'But why should I mind going to your house, you know, I've been there many a time before' the five or six year old boy who hadn't, by the way, been told that he'd ever gone to this house, was remembering his previous visits. So this little story he told me himself, just by way of illustration. And he said up to the age of seven or eight he did have these recollections.

Anyway he was taken off to one of the three great monastic universities, taken off to Drepung in Lhasa and he remained there for many, many years, and he told me - this came up in an interesting context - he told me that his predecessors, in incarnation, as it were, had all been, well until the last one, had been Nyingmapa lamas. How this came up was this. I had myself a number of initiations from the Nyingmapa lamas at different times. From Jamyang Khentse Rimpoche, Dilgo Khentse Rimpoche, from Chetul Sangye Dorje, from Kachu Rimpoche, these were the main ones. And I happened to say to Dhardo Rimpoche rather jokingly "You're the only Gelugpa teacher that I have and he said jokingly "Ah, but I'm not really a Gelugpa!" (Laughter) And I said "Well, then Rimpoche, what are you?" He said, "Well, really I'm supposed to be a Nyingmapa." So I asked "Well, how was that?" and then he explained that the monastery of which he had been head in Dhartsendo, the monastery of which the line, his line, he was the eighth by-the-way, the eighth reincarnation, as it were, had been heads, had originally been a Nyingmapa monastery. But the thirteenth Dalai Lama who was a rather strong-minded sort of Dalai Lama, had tried to turn many of the Nyingmapa monasteries into Gelugpa monasteries, had removed their head lamas, their incarnate head lamas, not allowed them to study in Eastern Tibet where the Nyingmapa tradition was very strong, had removed them to Lhasa, put them into the big monastic universities there, which of course belonged to the Gelugpas, and this had happened to his predecessor and had happened to him but by tradition the line and the monastery were Nyingmapa and he had himself, he said, a very special connection with Padmasambhava. So it turned out in a sense, after all, all my teachers were Nyingmapas. So he was quite amused to tell me this story.

Perhaps I should tell you just a little bit about him as a person. Amongst you I think only two people have actually seen him in the flesh, that's Lokamitra and Surata. I believe one or two Friends also did get up to, one or two mitras, did get up to Kalimpong and see him too but of course they are not here. He's quite short. He's only about so high and of course, looks, yes looks like a Tibetan but if you look closely maybe he does look more like a Chinese. He's got quite a yellowish complexion and he's got a little sort of mandarin moustache which Tibetan lamas often wear and very bright, twinkling eyes and he's always about to laugh as it were, his expression is very, very bright, very amused, very aware, very alert, and he moves about in this sort of way. He's always on the ball. This was the thing I noticed about him most of all, he was never at a loss. He was not only completely mindful, he always did exactly the right thing at the right moment. He was never caught napping. It was really quite extraordinary and I'll give you just one little example. This was from the year 1956 and in the year 1956 when the two thousand five hundredth anniversary of Buddhism was celebrated, two thousand five hundredth anniversary of the parinirvana, fifty-seven 'distinguished Buddhist from border areas' as we were called, were invited by the government of India to two of the holy places and various government of India industrial projects (Laughter) in a special train all around India and then arrive in Delhi in time to receive the Dalai Lama and take part in the celebrations there. So amongst the fifty-seven 'distinguished Buddhists from border areas' was Dhardo Rimpoche' and me. So we somehow just got together. That was when I started to get to

know Dhardo Rimpoche really well. I'd known him quite well before then from about 1950 but I hadn't known him very well and he certainly hadn't become my teacher though I'd had quite a bit of contact with him mainly via public meetings, Buddhist celebrations, Wesak meetings to which I'd invited him or where I'd asked him to speak and so on but we got to know each other quite well first on this particular tour. So one of the things I noticed was this. We arrived amongst other holy places at Kusinara, or rather at the nearest railway station, and that day the government of India guide who was in charge of the programme, an Indian of course, was going to take us to see two places. In the morning we were going to see some industrial project or other, I'm sorry I forget, I forgotten whether it was a dam or whether it was a cement factory (Laughter) but I just don't remember I'm sorry to say. And in the afternoon we were going to see the Mahaparinirvana temple. So of course all the Tibetans present, in fact all the Buddhists present, all fifty-seven, everywhere we went which was a holy place, we took along loads of candles and incense and offerings - that being the right and proper thing to do. So that morning we felt, well we won't need anything, we're only going to see this industrial project, whatever it was. No need for candles and incense there. They weren't going to waste their good candles and incense on government of India industrial projects, so they were all left in the train and off we went in our coach. When we got there we found we were at Kusinara. Without telling anybody anything the guide had switched the two parts of the programme so that we were at Kusinara in the morning instead of in the afternoon and in the afternoon apparently, we were going to go to the whatever it was. So there we were in Kusinara where the Buddha had passed away, no candles, no incense, no offerings. But Dhardo Rimpoche from beneath his voluminous robes and Tibetan robes are voluminous, he pulled out a great bag full of candles, incense (Laughter), enough for everybody. With a smile he handed them out, and how he knew nobody ever knew but there, he had that sort of smile on his face and that little twinkle in his eye and he apparently had somehow guessed something like that was going to happen. But he was the only one, he wasn't caught napping and that's the thing I want to stress.

I've seen all sorts of things happening at his little school, unexpected visitors, government officials, people from the west, local traders, Tibetans, he's always done exactly the right thing, said exactly the right thing, never caught out in any way, I've never known him unmindful. And I was associated with him for quite a few years. Even down to the tiniest detail, he was never unmindful, never forgetful, never never failed to exactly the right thing at the right moment. So this was his most outstanding characteristic in addition to his unfailing cheerfulness. He was always cheerful and had this sort of sparkle or even sometimes twinkle in his eye. But let's go back a minute, this is all rather vague and rambling because I'm just drawing on memories that I haven't really ever put together. Let's go back to his education in Lhasa at Drepung. He completed his course. He's a quite learned man, in fact a very learned man and after completing his course on Vinaya, Abhidharma, Madhyamika and the various other things that they study, he went on to the Tantric college. I forget whether it was Gyu-med or the other one. But he went to one of these for his Tantric studies but he only stayed there a year. He told me that the discipline was so strict, so severe, his health started breaking down and so he left after a year.

So he used to say again, with a smile, with a twinkle in his eye that he wasn't really a Tantric lama at all. He'd not been able to make the grade, he'd only been there a year. And eventually he was sort of in the line for a succession of what is called the 'Enthroned of Ganden' the head of the Gelugpa order. But of course there was the Chinese invasion eventually and he never got around to taking that up and the Dalai Lama in about 1948, I think it was, sent him down to Buddhagaya as his cultural representative. He was in Buddhagaya for several years, in charge of the Tibetan monastery there, and there he learnt Hindi because Buddhagaya is in Bihar. Hindi is the language spoken there and

that proved very useful because we were always able to communicate in Hindi with an admixture of Tibetan religious terms. So we had this medium of communication. Then in Kalimpong he started a school, most of you have heard about this, he started that while I was there, this is about twenty-one years old now, I think, a school for about two hundred and fifty pupils, boys and girls of all ages, and he gives them a Western education plus lots of Dharma instruction, Tibetan music, folk dancing, painting and all that sort of thing.

I must also stress, another feature of Dhardo Rimpoche was his extreme independence. I think this is one of the things in him that appeals to me since I'm maybe a bit independent myself. His independence especially vis-a-vis the Tibetan government officials. The Tibetan government officials in the old days were really, I was almost going to say, what the Chinese propaganda says they are. They were really awful. And they really did expect everything to be under their thumb including the lamas and he just wouldn't have it and he always spoke his own mind in Kalimpong on any subject of importance or public interest, any religious topic, without any regards to what the Tibetan government officials would think or what they would say and this made him extremely unpopular with them. They tried to close down his school and do all sorts of other things which are even quite painful to think of. But anyway he survived it all. He always came up smiling. He always survived. He seems to have an infinite capacity for survival. I must say, and this is again something that I appreciate, he was one of the people of whom you could say, that they were not only as harmless as the dove but also as wise as the serpent. And I've also said, you might remember, that you can't afford to be as harmless as the dove unless you're also as wise as the serpent and he really was that. I mean if it wasn't a slightly pejorative term I'd say he was crafty. [Laughter] But always in self-defence! He never took the offensive against anybody but he used his craft to survive and to help his school to survive and the Dharma to survive and he was infinitely resourceful. He was always in unfailing good humour, you know, good spirits, he was always cheerful, he was always glad to see one and I only saw him even a little bit downcast just once, just once. And the incident, the occasion was when a certain notable Buddhist lady of the locality, belonging to the Bhutanese aristocracy was a little bit rude to him, and he just couldn't understand it because it's so unthinkable in Tibetan Buddhist circles, even Bhutanese Buddhist circles, not quite so refined as the Tibetan, that you aren't rude to lamas, especially incarnate llamas but she was rude to him. I won't go into the details, he did tell me at the time and he just for a little while, he couldn't get over this. He said to me "What do you think she said?" And it really sort of quite, I won't say shook him, he couldn't be shaken but he was more puzzled. And just a little downcast, not in any personal way, but that somebody could behave in that sort of way, in the sort of way that one just didn't behave. So for just for half an hour or so he was a bit downcast but that was all. That was the only time I ever saw him downcast or a bit sad or anything of that sort in all the time that I knew him. So he was a combination of quite remarkable qualities. He was a good organiser, he ran his school beautifully. He was also a good scholar. He gave a lot of help to quite a lot of visiting Tibetologists from the West, who did not always acknowledge the help that they received. And he was a very good speaker, good public speaker, really witty and a very good speaker on the Dharma in public, very, very popular with the Tibetan public despite what the officials thought of him and they flocked to hear Dhardo Rimpoche give a lecture on Buddhism in Tibetan, he gave it really well. And also another thing, though he was so steeped in tradition and deep, very, very much a committed Tibetan Buddhist, he was very open to the modern world. This was another quite extraordinary thing which hardly any of the other lamas were. He kept a firm hold on the essentials of tradition but he didn't mind experimenting and innovating and doing things in a slightly different way. He was very, very adaptable, very intelligent.

When I got to know him better and we were sometimes talking over the difficulties of the Tibetan refugees and the Tibetan government in exile and the Dalai Lamas I used to say "Rimpoche, I really wish you'd been the Dalai Lama. Things really would have been done in a better way", and I really believed that. I feel that he had much more natural capacity than almost any of the other Tibetan lamas I met. And in this wonderful sort of combination and above it all, I felt, he had the real bodhisattva spirit. So I was also very happy to be able to take the Bodhisattva Ordination from him. So this is just a little bit about Dhardo Rimpoche and as I said I received in particular the White Tara initiation from him which seemed very suitable. If I may say so he seemed to have despite the fact which, that he was technically a man, which I suppose is a bit irrelevant in this context, he seemed to have many of the qualities of the White Tara, in a strange sort of way that perhaps one couldn't quite understand without knowing him and also without doing the White Tara practice. So perhaps I'd better pass on. Lots of questions about visualisations. Yes, here's a very good one.

"Why are some visualisations done objectively, i.e. outside oneself and some subjectively i.e. inside oneself. Are they traditionally practised a certain way or is it a matter of temperament?"

No it's not a matter of temperament. It's not also exactly inside oneself. Yes, it's called visualisation in front and visualisation of self. Or sometimes it's called 'production in front', that is of the visualised image and sometimes the other is called 'production of self' or 'self-production'. So production in front, and self-production. Now what is meant by that? [We'll] Have to be a bit philosophical here. As you know we operate within a dualistic framework, that is to say, within a framework of subject and object. Subject here, object out there. But according to all schools of Buddhist thought, Buddhist philosophy, according to ultimate Buddhist spiritual experience, this dichotomy of subject and object is only relatively valid and ultimately to be transcended. And that in the enlightenment experience there is no subject and no object. But how are you to get to that? You see subject and you see object. But the enlightened state is neither subject nor object. So how are you going to get to that? You have to see the object as the enlightened state and also the subject as the enlightened state. When you see the object as the enlightened state which is of course not an object, but you cannot but think of it as an object because you operate within this dualistic framework, then that is the production in front. And when you think of the enlightened state as the subject, as you, that is the self-production. So you sort of alternate these, sometimes you do one, sometimes you do the other, and in this way they, sort of, gradually merge, and you have a sort of non-dualistic experience, an experience, a sort of flash of insight at first which pertains exclusively neither to the subject nor to the object. You sort of hover in between, which is not in between two things, the two things, well don't even come together but the difference, the distinction between them is transcended, and just for an instant you get a non-dual experience which you cannot describe as either subject or object. You neither see in front nor in here.

So this is perhaps as much as can be said just in a few words. So it is very important. If you're doing a production here, a self-production, sooner or later you must get around to the production in front. If you're doing the production in front, sooner or later get around to the production here, the self-production. Either with the same visualisation figure, the same buddha or bodhisattva or with a different one.

Alright.

"Can there be serious danger in making effort in a visualisation practice when one is

genuinely tired, i.e. sleepy at the end of the day"?

It depends what one means by "genuinely tired". We are very, very rarely exhausted and again the question arises, well, on what level tired? It very rarely happens that you're so tired, so devoid of energy that you cannot break through to an even deeper level where you're not tired. So I don't think that there's any danger in making an effort, because you could break through to a deeper level of energy, and I'm sure most of us have experienced that from time to time. Meditation time comes, you feel really tired, you couldn't possibly meditate, no energy, but you think alright I might as well sit just for the sake of it and you have a good meditation. But even if you don't and the effort isn't successful I doubt if there'd be any danger in making that effort at all. Unless of course you were doing this systematically and habitually in which case you might just exhaust yourself but then you'd just have to sleep. But if it was just once in a way that you did this and didn't succeed in breaking through into that deeper level of energy you wouldn't be in any serious danger. (Pause)

I'm trying to group these a little bit as far as I can. There are two related questions here.

"Is there any explanation as to why Tara doesn't mind mistakes whilst visualising mistakes while visualising her unlike other deities?"

Well, there are some statements which are to be taken poetically, not too literally. One is to take the spirit rather than the letter. Why do you think Tara doesn't mind you making mistakes? What is the purpose of saying that? It's as though the purpose is to give some impression, some intuition, of a completely positive forgiving sort of being. Not on the lower mother-like level, that mother doesn't mind what you do, whatever it is. No. On some higher spiritual level but it just doesn't matter. That there is the possibility of a mind, even of a being, which is totally accepting of you. But again I must stress not on the ordinary sort of level, like mother might accept and even enjoy all the antics of her little boy, however naughty they were. No, not on that level. But much deeper, much higher level. So Tara represents just that. Of course you could say the others represent it too but you can't have every deity, to use that term, representing all aspects - different ones represent different aspects. So here this particular aspect of total forgiveness, forgiveness, total acceptance, is associated with the figure of Tara. And therefore it's said that Tara just doesn't mind. If you make a mistake, if you cut it short, she doesn't mind. If you miss a few words, you mispronounce, she doesn't mind. Because there is, as it were, some ultimate reality, some ultimate dimension which is so far above karma and right and wrong and good and evil, mistakes and confusions, which is totally accepting of you in your deepest essence, as it were, regardless of what you do but which is not motherly and indulgent. I must stress that.

And this aspect, as I said, is associated with the figure of Tara, traditionally. It could just as well be associated with any other figure but tradition hasn't worked like that just as Manjughosa is associated with wisdom. It doesn't mean that only Manjughosa possesses wisdom - we can't take it in that crude literal sense, but that is the particular aspect embodied in the total figure of Manjughosa. So here it's compassion, wisdom, forgiveness, acceptance, all that which is embodied in Tara.

Two: *"Some meditation teachers are very strict about stillness and quietness whilst sitting. We might not wish to go round with a stick but could we benefit by tightening up in this area? Thank you."* (Laughter)

Well, the short answer to that one is yes. But it isn't really a question of somebody going round with

a stick. Because after all you are all Order Members and it shouldn't be necessary for anybody to go round with a stick. You should know these things for yourself. It shouldn't be necessary for anybody to get at you. And this is why I said a day or two ago, when we were discussing the convention that I don't feel that I personally am leading the convention like I might have been leading retreats because in a way to lead Order Members in that sort of sense is almost a contradiction in terms. Maybe a general sense of direction one can give, but all these sort of things Order Members ought to be able to look after themselves and accept responsibility for the way in which they sit. By this time they should at least have been able to accept that responsibility. But if you feel that your sitting posture is not correct or if you suspect it could be improved, well, just approach Surata. [Laughter] As far as I know this isn't by Surata, and just ask him to help you. I'm sure he'd be only too glad to do so, with or without a stick.

"In the Tara visualisation practice what colour is the background when you visualise the Tam on the Moon mat?"

Well, you don't have a background here, because it's the production of self. It's self-production. So you don't think about any background as you would do if it was in front, you'd visualise the blue sky symbolising the void. You could if you liked do a six element practice or equivalent to, as it were, make yourself void and empty first and then in your void and empty self visualise the Moon mat, the Moon disc on that the syllable Tam. But strictly speaking since it's an, as it were, subjective visualisation there's no need for the background of blue sky or anything of that sort.

"Can someone grow without having a feeling for the transcendental? Is it possible to be an individual without having had a feeling for the transcendental?"

Well, this depends to some extent on a definition of terms. What one means by growth, and what one means by an individual. "Can someone grow without having a feeling for the transcendental?" Yes, up to a point. Grow in the ordinary human sense, grow spiritually but if you want to grow in the higher spiritual sense, to be a true individual, then you must have at least a feeling for the transcendental. That is to say, of something utterly beyond, to which, or towards which you are growing and in growth towards which true growth actually consists. It may be very obscured, it may be very dim, very distant, you may not be able to formulate it. You may not be able to put it into words or describe it or define it but there must be this sense, not even of something beyond, but that there is something beyond, if you see what I mean. For higher spiritual growth and development you must have this sort of sense, however obscured, however vague, however dim.

And, "Is it possible to be an individual without having had a feeling for the transcendental." Not an individual in the sense of true individual. I'm taking it that there's not any particular emphasis on the word 'feeling' here. I take it that it's meant in the sense of a sort of sense. Not something you can formulate very precisely. But in order to be a true individual, to grow into a true individual, to grow as a true individual, more or less in the sense that I've described in that latest issue of 'Mitrata', yes, one needs to have a feeling for the transcendental. But one must be careful to differentiate this from the ability to define the transcendental in words. In fact the more you have this feeling the less you will feel inclined to attempt any definition.

"If one chooses a visual object as an object of concentration, e.g. a flower, presumably one's level of consciousness is limited thereby to the kamaloka. If so how is it that the breath being used as an object of concentration can lead to levels of consciousness beyond the kamaloka?"

Good question. The key word here is "lead" because one thing leads to another. It may not directly lead but it may lead to something which leads on to something else. So "if one chooses a visual object as an object of concentration, e.g. a flower, presumably one's level of consciousness is limited thereby to the kamaloka"? Not necessarily. There is a traditional practice called 'kasina' practice, you might have heard of it. The device. The red disc, or the yellow disc, or the blue disc, or the white disc, on which you concentrate. And with the help of such a disc, you can, one by one, pass up through all the dhyanas and one of the traditional ways of making this disc is with flowers. You take, for instance, a whole big handful or two handfuls of bright red flowers and you spread them on the ground in front of you at a distance in such a way that when you sit down and look at them it looks like a round disc. So this is flowers. A disc of flowers, you're concentrating on flowers or rather on the redness of the flowers.

So what you do is this. You first of all practice concentrating on that visual object, with your open physical eyes. You just look. You just look until all your thoughts are absorbed in that, the red colour, as it were, absorbs all your wandering thoughts and you're completely concentrated, that's the first stage. Then you close your eyes and you reproduce that red disc mentally. A sort of eidetic image, just like you do in any other visualisation and if you lose it from time to time you just open your eyes and go back to the original physical object. That's the second stage. This corresponds to the neighbourhood concentration. Then when you've practised with this internal mentally visualised disc for a while, the red disc, then you have a sort of, what's called 'photic' experience, an experience of light in one way or another. You may find that a bright disc like a moon, like a full moon, emerges from the red disc or you might find it starts flashing or twinkling or you might have some other kind of experience. It might be emotional experience, but intensely blissful or something of that sort but anyway that gives you your link to the next higher stage and from there you can go to the first dhyana. From the first dhyana you go to the second. So in this way starting with the visual object, the flowers, you're ascending through all the dhyanas and you're going from the kamaloka to the rupaloka, and then to the arupaloka even, and you can even develop vipassana and go into the transcendental. And it's the same with the breath, because the question is. "If so how is it that the breath being used as an object of concentration can lead to levels of consciousness beyond the kamaloka?" Well, first of all you concentrate on the grosser breath then in the successive stages it becomes subtler and subtler and subtler until you're left just with this fine point, there's the sensation in the nostril, and when you've come to that point when you're very, very concentrated then you can begin to approach the first dhyana. So even though you started with the material object, the breath, by degrees you go more and more subtly, higher and higher, until you enter the dhyanas and from one dhyana you can go onto the next.

So you may start with the material object but the fact that you start with a material object in the kamaloka doesn't mean that because your starting point is in the kamaloka you are bound to the kamaloka. You can go step by step. So you can start, even with the gross physical object and then go to the subtle counterpart and then to something still more subtle until you rise up into the dhyanas in both these cases, in fact in any such case.

(End of side one side two)

"Do you feel the six-element practice to be more relevant or useful to the Order in general."

It seems to work better, it seems to have a stronger effect. Maybe I should, you know, gather a bit

more information before being too categorical about this but it does seem that because it's concrete, because it involves an element of visualisation, in fact, well, feeling let's say, not visualisation in the ordinary sense but something of that nature it has a stronger effect and breaks down, one's I-sense more effectively than the other practices. This seems to be broadly the case as regards as most Order Members as this is why I feel maybe, amongst the three practices that have been mentioned we should perhaps concentrate a bit more on this. But if anybody finds either the meditation on death or the root verses of the Bardo or the meditation on the Nidana chain more inspiring and more useful well, by all means, have recourse to those. But I think, on the whole, probably the six element practice is more relevant and useful.

"How can one help friends and relations who aren't Buddhist but on the other hand don't have any other religious convictions to die in as positive a mental state as possible? When they die especially we haven't been able to help them much or at all. What can we do if anything to help them gain a rebirth in which they come into contact with the Dharma?"

Well, the one word answer to this, is simply mettā. That's the best thing you can do. If you can't speak directly about the Dharma to them because they aren't interested or don't have any religious conviction, if you are in contact with them at the time or the moment of death just be as positive as you can. Let them feel your presence there in a very supportive manner, let them feel that you really are with them, that you are concerned for them, that your metta is being directed towards them. But not in any sort of clinging way, don't encourage that and just say, well, the time has come to die. We all have to die one day. There's nothing to it. Just let go, calmly, quietly, easily, you're all right. Everything's all right. Just give this sort of reassurance so that they are peaceful and collected and depart with some sense of somebody's metta. And of course, after death according to Tibetan tradition one can remain in sort of, as it were, telepathic contact with them, they are still in fact in contact with you perhaps, perhaps they can even sense you, even see you, hear you with subtle senses, so continue to direct thoughts of metta towards them. This is the best that one can do, and it's a very great deal in these sort of circumstances and if they feel somebody's metta that will surely have a soothing effect on them. They will feel a little metta and that will certainly have a positive effect as regards any future possible rebirth. And depending on the circumstances of the person you can just as it were, aspire, or if you like, even use the word prayer, you can pray as it were, or wish very intensely that may they come in contact with the Dharma. Or may we be together in such a way, in a future life, if we both have future lives, if I don't say gain enlightenment before that, may we both be together in such a way that I am able to communicate to them the Dharma which I've not been able to do in this life. You can express in a very heartfelt way to yourself some such prayer, some such aspiration after they are gone. And this, inasmuch as thought is a force will surely help.

"We as an Order do prostrations and visualisations practices but most of us our visual content is grounded in a Western tradition. Does this mean that the buddhas and bodhisattvas etc., that we visualise will have the same dress in our sadhana but with Western facial features?"

I think the only thing one can do here is start off with tradition exactly as it is given and allow it to change, as it were, quite naturally and it will change. It has changed in the past. If you look at the Buddhas of say, Japan and China, Central Asia, they're quite different in many respects from the Buddhas of India and Ceylon, Nepal, they've got different facial features, even sometimes a different style of dress. So this will happen in our case. There will be a sort of Western version of a bodhisattva, a Western version of a buddha, we're moving in that direction already but we don't want

to do it too, sort of, rashly, or too much in a sort of intellectual, theoretical basis. More concerned to let it just, I won't say grow or happen, but evolve naturally. So start off with the traditional forms as they come, you know, to us from the Eastern tradition but as they change, if they change, well let it be so. That's a quite natural and a quite normal thing. But I think we shouldn't try to change anything in a deliberate sort of way. (Pause)

"In the contemplation of the six elements meditation in the last stage, we reflect that at death our individual consciousness dissolves away into the larger universal consciousness. However, reading 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead', one gets the impression that there is in fact continuity of some form of individualised consciousness because particular apparitions or visions are apprehended and presumably it requires an individualised consciousness for there to be an awareness of them. Is this a real discrepancy?"

No, it isn't. Because according to the teaching of 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' at the time of death you experience, twice in fact, the clear light of the void which is supra-individual. Here, at least for an instant, the individual consciousness is dissolved into the large universal consciousness which is void. But it can't sustain it and therefore it comes back and then it experiences all these, what I've sometimes called archetypal visions. It's the re-individualised consciousness that experiences these apparitions or visions, so there isn't in fact any discrepancy here.

Oh! Well there's lots of questions but there's no time so we can't disappoint the people who've kindly written out these questions so what I think I should do is this. I was going in any case to give quite a short talk tomorrow. I'll make it a very short talk, just making my main points. No - I really promise. [Laughter] A short talk and then I'll deal with all these other questions after that. Perhaps we'll have just one or two very quick ones now because it would be a shame to waste all these questions and not have them answered. So just two very quick ones. I've selected them because they're on two teeny slips of paper.

"Can one really speak of a buddha as being born a Bodhisattva?"

Well, yes, in a way, tradition does sort of retrospectively. One does speak of Siddhartha, Gautama, the future Buddha being born as a bodhisattva in this life. Why? Because according to the developed Mahayana tradition the bodhisattva career lasts for three aeons, three kalpas, and in the course of those three aeons or three kalpas the bodhisattva traverses ten bhumis or ten stages of spiritual development as a bodhisattva. It's in the tenth bhumi that he attains samyak sambuddhahood. And when he is born for the last time, that is to say born into the body in which he will attain samyak sambuddhahood thereby achieving the tenth bhumi, he is already in the ninth bhumi. He is no longer under the power of karma. He chooses his rebirth and he's waiting for the right moment, as it were, in the Tushita Devaloka, being already in the ninth bhumi, and when he sees that the time has come, the time is right, then he descends again and takes his last human birth. This is the developed Mahayana teaching which of course is not found in the earlier texts. I won't go in to the correctness or incorrectness of it now. But in this sense one can speak of the Buddha, as it were, retrospectively as having been born as a bodhisattva. Really, it's the bodhisattva who is born, the bodhisattva in the ninth bhumi, who is born for the last time as a result of his own choice of human parents and having been born in that way in his last life traverses the tenth bhumi, gains enlightenment and reopens the path to enlightenment for all living beings. Alright, last question.

"In the categorisation of the 'Going for Refuge' the ordinary Friend who is not yet a mitra

goes for Refuge only in the formal sense, not in the provisional sense, yes?"

The yes is in the question." "The ordinary Friend who is not yet a mitra goes for Refuge only in the formal sense." Not necessarily. One must point out here that there are, sort of, intermediate grades. I've marked off the six main levels, or at least five main levels. But sometimes it would be quite difficult to tell whether a particular person is in one or the other in any given case. So it's quite possible therefore there to be a Friend who is not yet a mitra who doesn't go for Refuge even in the formal sense. He or she may stay away from pujas, may not like pujas, but may be quite involved in other ways and they consider that he or she does in fact, sort of, in a way, belong. So not necessarily. But on the other hand, yes, there might be Friends who just come along, like the group and recite the puja, join in the refuges, precepts, just because it's something that's done and they don't particularly bother about it, just like the sound of the chanting perhaps. So you could say that they were Going for Refuge only in that formal sense. So in the case of the ordinary Friend who is not yet a mitra they may go for refuge only in the formal sense or they may go for the refuge in the provisional sense. There are both possibilities.

Anyway that's the lot for this evening. I must say, I hadn't expected quite so many questions. But it's a good thing that we have had them, and quite a lot have been answered and let's hope the remainder, all of them can be dealt with tomorrow evening, after, or perhaps even before my little short talk. But anyway perhaps now in, let's say five minutes time we could have the bell rung and we have are concluding meditation and seven fold puja.

End of Tape one, Tape two

We have in fact I think rather more questions tonight than we had last night and still quite a few of them do centre on the subject of visualisation. And as it is quite an important one, I thought I would be justified in devoting time to these questions rather than to the lecture especially as we are, in any case, running a little late and we wouldn't really have time even for an abbreviated lecture together with the answers to the questions.

There is a group, first of all, of three questions here.

"If one has two visualisation practices what should the relationship between them be? If there is only time for one each day which should be done?"

This is quite a question isn't it. "If one has two visualisation practices what should the relationship between them be?"

I'm not quite sure what is meant by this, whether it means perhaps, or whether perhaps the questioner isn't asking but the practices should not be complementary in a sense. That is to say, if you have one wrathful deity visualisation should you not have another peaceful deity visualisation? Perhaps it's to be taken in that sense, or perhaps in another sense, that I have somewhere spoken about, that is to say, how you, sort of, make the connection between them. Supposing you want to do the Tara practice and also you want to do the Amitabha practice and supposing the Tara practice is your basic practice, that is to say, the practice, the mantra pertaining to which you received at the time of your private ordination. Then how do you go from the Tara practice to the Amitabha practice. Well how you go is in this way.

You do the Tara practice whether it's an in front production practice or a self production practice and

then, regardless of whichever it was, you think that you are Tara, that you yourself are Tara and that as Tara you do the Amitabha practice. You visualise Amitabha. In this way you bring them together and if you have a third practice, say you also want to do the Manjughosa visualisation, and supposing the Tara visualisation is your basic practice then again you visualise yourself as Tara and think and feel yourself as Tara doing the Amitabha practice. In this way again, you link them up otherwise the relationship between them is pretty much as you feel, or as you wish, in the sense that it's up to you, in consultation with whoever gives you the practice whether you add in, say a Manjughosa practice to your existing Tara practice or a Vajrasattva practice to your existing Padmasambhava practice and so on.

But one can build up a sort of small repertoire of visualisation practices to which you have recourse on different occasions or according to circumstances which you do at different times during the day when you're on solitary retreat or which you do one in the morning, one in the evening, regularly and so on. Though one starts off with one practice, and though one should make that one's main practice and normally get thoroughly into that before taking up any second or third practice, you can certainly have what I've called this small repertoire of visualisation practices. You don't have to stay simply with one. And in any case, of course, in the long run, all these different practices, all these different visualisations are united inasmuch as all the buddhas and bodhisattvas are united. Eventually they all form one great and glorious mandala which is, of course, the mandala of the five buddhas or five jinas with their respective bodhisattvas, dakas, dakinis, dharmapalas, and so on. So eventually they're all interrelated in this way. Another point that occurs to me to mention is that more often than not all one's different visualisation deities, to use that term, are from the same buddha family. You know that the five buddhas, as it were, preside over five different buddha families. Say Amitabha presides over the Lotus family, the Padma family. So who belongs to that Padma family? Well, it's quite large and one might say distinguished family. There's Avalokitesvara, he belongs to it, Tara belongs to it, especially the White Tara, Padmasambhava belongs to it and there are so many others. Amitayus belongs to it because Amitayus is a form of Amitabha. So very often all one's different practices are taken from the same family. But again there is a sort of complementarity between families. You might feel that you need to balance a bit of the Padma family with a bit of the Vajra family. So you might feel that in addition, say to doing the Tara practice, you'd like to do the Akshobya practice, to sort of, even up a bit.

Though this again is on a sort of lower, psychological level where one can speak of sort of complementarities in this way. But the higher you get the more you see and you feel that all the different buddha and bodhisattva figures, in a sense, embody all the aspects, and if one thinks in terms of say love, and wisdom in the ordinary sense, or love and understanding in the ordinary sense of complementarity then this clearly pertains to a lower psychological level and doesn't hold good at the higher more spiritual level.

The second question touches on some of the things I've been saying. That is to say,

"In a visualisation involving the five jinas, that is to say the five buddhas, how should they be seen, i.e. is there any way in which their superiority should be felt?"

Well, you visualise them, of course, in the way that we did last night, we, you visualise a mandala of the five dhyanas, the five buddhas in as much detail as you wish. Last night I didn't for obvious reasons go in to too much detail but supposing you're visualising the White Buddha, Vairocana, the central buddha, then you visualise him as seated in the Vajrasana posture, you visualise him as seated

on a lion throne in his case, his attendant animals being lions. You visualise him with his hands in the dharmachakra pravartana mudra or as holding a golden dharmachakra. And you visualise him with the ornaments of one of the Sambhogakaya buddhas, and in the same way for all the others. But what you think and feel particularly is that each buddha is the, as it were, living spiritual or transcendental embodiment of his particular awareness or jnana. This is the main point to be borne in mind. That these five buddhas represent the four main aspects of jnana, the transcendental awareness, the central buddha of course, being the basic awareness or jnana itself. So this is the main point to bear in mind in connection with the visualisation of the five jinas. Apart from the iconographic details like their colours and insignia, that they are the transcendental embodiments of these five awarenesses or jnanas.

Number three is a quite different question but we'll go straight on to that.

"You have talked of it being possible to draw in, to draw one in twenty people in Britain into the orbit of the FWBO. How is this figure derived?"

Well, how is it derived? I must confess this is an entirely impressionistic figure. It's inspired guesswork. But even impressions have their sources. Even inspired guesswork must have something to start from and how I arrived at this figure was in this way. Travelling say around London, especially travelling on the Tube or walking along the street as you sort of look around you, you can see about twenty people at one and the same time, and sort of take them in. And I've felt looking around and taking in these twenty and looking from one to another, that yes in every twenty there's one who definitely would respond, you felt that as you looked at them and sort of studied each one individually. There's one who is a little bit different you feel, or you see. And who could respond and become interested if you did manage to get into conversation with him or her and have them for a sufficiently long time and really begin to communicate. I'm quite sure of this. So it's roughly one in twenty on this basis.

Another thing that I really would like to take the opportunity of saying, because this is one of my, I might say, quite strongly held convictions, that I do not believe that in order to be able to understand Buddhism, in order to be able to tread the spiritual path and to appreciate what all that is about, that you need to be highly educated or intellectual or even highly cultured. I simply don't believe this. I remember that when I was in India some of my high caste Hindu friends used to tell me it was useless talking on sublime spiritual truths to these wretched ex-Untouchables who'd just become Buddhists. That they were quite incapable of understanding any such truths and this is why the Brahmins had never ever imparted any such truths to them within the context of the Hindu religion. Their Dharma was simply to serve the other castes, that was their religion, just to be of service, to hew wood, and I was going to say draw water but, no, that would be pollution, they couldn't touch the water drunk by higher castes. But to do all the dirty work, that was their Dharma, that was about as much religion as they were capable of practising and if they chose to sing a few devotional songs in the evening, not to orthodox Hindu gods because presumably that would pollute them, but to their own untouchable gods, well, that would be all right.

But my own experience was totally different when I actually started mixing with the ex-Untouchables I found that they were as intelligent as anybody else and they could understand anything that you chose to put across to them, provided you did it clearly and built it up systematically, maybe over a period of months, or even years, if you went to visit them regularly. And I certainly didn't find any difference of innate intelligence as between the ex-Untouchables and

the higher caste Hindus. So I'm quite convinced that Buddhism as such and the spiritual life and the spiritual path as such, that the ordinary, average man or woman if it is only put to them properly, correctly and clearly, is quite able to understand and practice and follow. I don't believe that you have to be specially gifted intellectually or to have a good education or to have gone to college or university etc., in order to be able to understand Buddhism and follow the spiritual path and lead a spiritual life. So maybe I would even say that this is an understatement, one in twenty, it might even be one in ten, except, except in the universities, it might not be more than one in a hundred there. (Laughter) Because, because intellectual people are much more difficult to deal with, and more often than not, much less receptive than ordinary, what they would regard as simple people. But there is this tendency among our so-called cultural elite and our so-called intellectual elite really to look down upon and almost despise the ordinary person thinking that they cannot understand, but the truth is in fact that they can. They may not be so intellectually sophisticated, they may not be able to play these nice little intellectual games quite so skilfully but their basic intelligence and power of understanding is at least as good as that of the more highly educated or the so-called intellectuals. So I must say, as I said earlier, that this is one of my most strongly held convictions and this basically why I do feel that at least one in twenty people in Britain, could, if properly approached and communicated with, come to appreciate and to some extent, at least, practice what the FWBO, what the Friends, what Buddhism, what the Dharma, is all about.

All right, something quite different now.

"In the early Yogachara vijñānavāda system of thought, is the Alayavijñāna a higher level of 'mind', single inverted commas, underlined, as such a, double inverted commas, "concept by intuition" or is it a, double inverted commas "concept by postulation" and as such merely a means of explaining where all 'potentiality', single inverted commas, is when not actual. (Laughter) No question mark? Also (Laughter) "What is the difference in later Yogachara thought between the Alaya and the Alayavijñāna?"

Well, I think the answer to the first sentence is quite clear. That (Laughter) the Alayavijñāna is both a concept by intuition and a concept by postulation. The two here coincide I would say. It's a concept by intuition inasmuch as the Alayavijñāna does represent a higher level of mind actually experienced in, as it were, the course of meditation. So having experienced this higher level of mind, and possibly it is connected with the Pali Theravadin conception of the pure and radiant consciousness, possibly, having experienced this, having experienced the Alayavijñāna in this sense, one tries to describe it, one tries to give a name to it, tries to give a label to it, and one calls it the Alayavijñāna and this is a concept by intuition, a concept based upon a previous spiritual experience in an attempt to describe it.

But also there's another way of looking at it. We see all sorts of things happening. We see things happening as a result of past karmas. We reap the results of past karmas, past actions, but there's an interval between the action and the reaction. But what has happened to the result of the action during the interval. It's sort of latent, it's sort of dormant, it's in sort of seed form. So where is it? It's in, as it were, the Alaya, in the store consciousness, it's being stored until such time as conditions permit it to be manifested in one's life and experience, in the form of the results of karma. So you therefore posit the Alaya as the hypothetical repository of all these seeds which you've stored up as a result of your karmas until such time as circumstances permit you to reap them. Now you don't actually see the Alaya in this sense, but you think that there must be some such repository because there must be some place, as it were, where all the seeds are stored up until such time as they can fructify. So in

this sense the Alaya represents a concept by postulation. So here I would say the two coincide. The concept by intuition based on one's actual experience, or somebody's actual experience, coincides with the concept by postulation arising out of somebody's attempt, i.e. the Yogacharin philosopher's attempt to explain where the seeds are, as it were, in the meantime.

Also "What is the difference in later Yogacharin thought between the Alaya and the Alayavijnana?" Strictly speaking there shouldn't be a distinction between Alaya and Alayavijnana. Alayavijnana means the repository consciousness but later thought does seem, especially in Tibet, especially So Guenther tells us in the Dzogchen system, to make this distinction. I must say that even after reading Guenther I wasn't completely clear or I might even say not at all clear as to the basis of this distinction. It did seem to be a theoretical refinement. So I think I'd prefer to leave it as the earlier Yogachara thought left it - simply as Alayavijnana and not try to distinguish between the Alaya and the vijnana at that level. Perhaps that's enough on that particular point. It's a little, I won't say abstruse but perhaps not the sort of question that might occur to everybody (Laughter). It does arise, of course, out of the general Yogachara vijnanavada context and the scriptural source here, the sutra source here, is mainly the Lankavatara sutra and it must be admitted that the thought of the Lankavatara sutra or rather its attempts or the Buddha's attempts in it to convey what is virtually the incommunicable makes the whole sutra very abstruse, very profound, very difficult, very rich and very worthwhile studying. But there aren't any really clear definitions of terms always and one needs to go into it quite deeply before one can even begin to sort it all out. (Pause)

Another one about consciousness - vijnana.

"It says in the Heart Sutra, 'nor is there consciousness'. Can you possibly say anything meaningful about this?"

"Nor is there consciousness". So what is the context here? The context here is, of course, the immediate context within the Heart Sutra is the five skandhas. The five skandhas are being negated: rupa, vedana, samjna, samkara and vijnana. These are initially denied to be in sunyata. Sunyata is here envisaged as the ultimate transcendental reality from which all conditionality, from which everything mundane, has been prescinded. And for traditional Buddhist thought, the mundane, the conditioned, is summed up in these five skandhas: rupa, or form as we usually translate it. It's really much more than that. Vedana, feeling of every kind, rupa, samjna usually translated as conceptions, samkara, volitions, and vijnana, consciousness. In early Buddhism, six consciousnesses, one for each of the five physical senses and one for the mind. So the consciousness which is being negated here, the consciousness about the sutra is speaking when it says "Nor is there consciousness" is the vijnana of the panca skandhas, the five skandhas. That is to say, in sunyata, in ultimate reality, there are no sense consciousnesses and no mind consciousness. These consciousnesses are entirely transcended, in sunyata they do not exist.

So this raises the question of well, is sunyata a state of complete nothingness, complete annihilation or is the vijnana of the five skandhas comprising those six vijnanas, the last word so far as vijnana is concerned. And one can say no. And referring back to the terminology of the five jinas, referring back to the five jnanas one sees a distinction between vijnana and jnana. This is quite important. Vi-, the prefix, indicates, as it were, something analytical, something split, something divided. So vijnana is a sort of dichotomised consciousness, because in the case of the sense consciousness, say the eye consciousness, here is the eye and there is the object of the eye, or the object of the eye consciousness. The subject and the object. So there is a division, there is a dichotomy. The same

with the other senses, the same with the mind. So *vijnana* represents, sort of, dualistic consciousness but then you've got *jnana* which is the same word minus the *vi-*. So *vijnana* and *jnana*. So what is *jnana*? *Jnana* you can say is the non-divisive consciousness. So if you remove the *vi-* from *vijnana* then you get just *jnana*. So usually these is translated as 'discriminative Awareness' and simply 'Awareness' with a capital A. So in *sunyata* conceived of as something transcendental, something transcending the mundane there is no *vijnana*, there is no discriminative consciousness but there is *jnana* or non-discriminative consciousness or rather *sunyata* from a slightly different point of view is itself that non-discriminative Awareness with a capital A symbolised by those five buddhas, or five *jin*as, each one of whom represents one particular aspect of that one, or rather non-dual awareness or *jnana*. (Pause)

All right we are coming now onto *dakas* and *dakinis* and *dharmapalas*. Another quite interesting subject.

"Last night", that's the night before last, "you explained the terms dakini and daka and talked about relating to one's own dakini and through that relating to other's dakinis, this being communication in a truly spiritual sangha sense. In the Refuge Tree visualisation on the third tier of lotus petals below Padmasambhava are dakinis, daka and dharmapalas. Could you explain what the dharmapalas' relationship is to the dakinis and dakas as they share the same tier and what dharmapalas mean in terms of one's own higher nature and spiritual communication?"

Well there's quite a question, "with thanks" [Laughter] . All right *dakas*, *dakinis*, *dharmapalas*. Maybe I better link that with another question which I see I have here.

"Is one's higher emotional nature a dakini whether one is a man or a woman? If so where do dakas fit in?" [Laughter]

I think I'd better eliminate those *dakas* first. That would simplify the picture. "Is one's higher emotional nature a dakini whether one is a man or a woman?" Yes. Yes. "If so where do *dakas* fit in?" As I've suggested they don't really fit in very well at all. No disrespect to the *dakas* but the situation is this. Let me try to explain it a little broadly. I've mentioned this scheme of the five *jin*as, the mandala of the five *jin*as? and they all have their attendant bodhisattvas and associated with them are various feminine forms, are various *dharmapalas*, and then *dakas*, *dakinis* and so on. In this way all the total, what we can only call in English, 'Pantheon', it's a quite inappropriate term, Pantheon of the Mahayana and the Vajrayana, is included in this beautiful, unified mandala containing all the buddhas and bodhisattvas and so on, arranged in these five families. This is the picture that you've got to get, as it were, in your minds. And included in that, really theoretically, are hundreds, thousands, even tens of thousands of figures. After all in the Mahayana you've got, well, in the scriptures, names of several thousands of buddhas and bodhisattvas but they all find a place in this one overall completely unified mandala of all the buddhas and all the bodhisattvas and all the everything else on that level.

But, but, human beings are very imperfect. Human needs are limited in particular directions. They're very specific. So not all those buddhas and bodhisattvas and so on, not all the different aspects of enlightenment and so on which they represent, are always relevant to the needs of all people all the time. Do you see what I mean? So if you fill in the whole figure. Let's take a very simple version. Let's simply take the five buddhas by themselves. All right, you have this mandala

of five buddhas. Wouldn't you suppose that visualisations of all five buddhas were equally popular, equally well-known, throughout the entire Mahayana, Vajrayana world. Wouldn't you have thought that? Oh, you can't speak can you. Yes, you would have thought that. Yes. (Laughter) There's five buddhas. Why should you differentiate between them. Even in five different families. So you might have thought, well, surely they would all enjoy equal respect, equal popularity and so on. But no they don't. Not in practical terms. In terms of actual visualisation practices which people do. In fact you find that for what we may call historical cum psychological reasons, a whole lot of practices cluster around Amitabha, a whole lot cluster around Akshobya, quite a lot round Vairocana but hardly any around Amoghasiddhi and hardly any around Ratnasambhava. They are, sort of, almost left out for all practical purposes. For various historical cum psychological reasons.

Then take the bodhisattvas, Avalokitesvara is very popular in Tibet. In that particular form he's not so popular in the Far East. In the Far East Kshitigarbha is overwhelmingly popular as a bodhisattva. All sorts of practices and sadhanas centre upon him. In Tibetan Buddhism he's virtually unknown. There's Akashagarbha who is a sort of twin of Kshitigarbha, he seems to be virtually neglected almost everywhere. There's Samantabhadra bodhisattva, very popular in China, hardly known in Tibet. Again, Mahastamaprapta a very popular bodhisattva with lots of practices and visualisations in China, again hardly known in Tibet.

So you begin to see the sort of picture. That for sort of subjective reasons in the course of centuries people have taken out from the pantheon, as it were, from among all these different buddha and bodhisattva figures what they needed or what corresponded to their actual needs. They didn't try to practice the whole set or to aim at balance or completeness because they were concerned with their own needs, their subjective needs, and quite rightly so. So to come back to the dakas and dakinis theoretically, yes, dakas and dakinis occupy an equal place. Sometimes in paintings of Padmasambhava's Pure Land you see dakas and dakinis both dancing around but in practice it seems to be that the dakinis have many visualisations and so on associated with them but the dakas are entirely neglected. So why is this? It's as though the daka, though he is the grammatical counterpart of the dakini, was sort of superfluous because what he might have represented was, sort of, divided between the ordinary bodhisattva forms which of course are usually masculine, and the herukas, the wrathful buddha forms. So really there was no need for a separate daka figure, even though grammatically, as it were, he was a possibility. So everything centred upon the dakini. It was the dakini who represented that aspect of higher emotionality through which one communicated with others within the spiritual community and which was therefore the esoteric form of the Sangha refuge. The daka though technically occupying a place and being named was really superfluous.

So this is why the term dakini can be applied to the higher emotional nature of either a man or a woman. So if we look at it, in say Blakean terms, what you've got basically is the individual. The Individual, maybe with a capital I, irrespective of physiological sex, an individual and this individual, again in Blakean terms, has two primary aspects: emanation and spectre, or the emotional side, the higher more refined emotional side, and the intellectual side or the reasoning side. So these can be either alienated or integrated. What usually happens, that if the, what Blake would call the fallen individuality is physiologically male then the tendency is to be alienated from the emanation and to identify with the spectre. If on the other hand the fallen individual is physiologically female the tendency is to be alienated from the spectre and to identify with the emanation. So when you're alienated in this way, if you are identified with, say, a spectre you tend to look for your emanation outside you, if you are identified with your emanation you tend to look for your spectre outside you. So you can see the possibilities. But if you are an integrated individual, whether physiologically

male or physiologically female, you have an integrated emanation and an integrated spectre that is to say, you're an emotionally and intellectually whole and complete person and relate to others whether they, in turn, are physiologically male or physiologically female, through your dakini, that is to say, your higher emotional nature, regardless of whether you too, are physiologically male or physiologically female. So that's all actually quite clear, you can listen to it again the tape if you want to.

So dakas really, really in practice don't fit in at all. They can be, for practical purposes, disregarded, though there they are in the iconography, and there are one or two of them of course, that can't be ignored. [Laughter] (Pause)

Voice: Do they correspond to the spectre?

S: Only if they were in an alienated form. That is they corresponded to the alienated spectre.

"With the experience now and for the last few years, of a stronger Order, are there any additions or amplifications you'd like to make of the points you made in 'Is a guru necessary'?"

That's the first question on this piece of paper. I don't really remember the points that I made in that particular lecture. I gave it some years ago. I don't think I've heard it since. I've might have heard it once, possibly in New Zealand, but I'm not sure even of that. But I do remember giving it and I do remember what I intended to do through this lecture, or rather what was at the back of my mind, regardless of whether it came out very clearly or not. So let me tell you what was at the back of my mind. At the back of my mind was to try to avoid two extremes. I don't know how many of you remember this lecture or have heard it fairly recently but at the back of my mind was a wish to avoid two extremes. One extreme being a sort of exaggerated personality cult. At that time when I gave this particular lecture we were seeing and hearing quite a lot of that in connection with the Guru Maharaj cult and this seemed something quite unpleasant. That sort of pseudo-guru adulation as one may call it. So it seemed necessary to warn people against that extreme.

On the other hand it seemed necessary to warn against the extreme of believing or supposing that spiritually speaking everybody was absolutely equal and that therefore there was no need for you to look up to anybody else as being in fact spiritually more knowledgeable or maybe more developed or more mature than yourself.

So these were the two extremes that it was at the back of my mind to avoid in this lecture, or rather to persuade people, should be avoided by them in their spiritual lives. It is an absolute necessity in any spiritual community that you should be able to look up, if possible to more than one person or individual whom you feel is more experienced, more mature, more insightful than you are yourself so that when occasion arises you can go to them with implicit faith and confidence and trust and ask them what you should do or to throw light on some particular question or problem that is troubling you. It is absolutely necessary within the spiritual community that you should have access to such a person, or persons. I would say, preferably in the plural because then this helps to obviate the other extreme I mentioned. Because the personality cult which was then typified by Guru Maharaji nowadays seems to be typified, among others, by Bhagavan Rajneesh, seems equally undesirable.

So one must follow a middle path. Not sort of regarding any human individual as almost literally god and sort of, prostrating yourself before them or grovelling before them in that sort of way but on the

other hand not refusing to recognise that anybody is spiritually superior to you or more advanced to you. These are the two extremes that must be avoided and I would say that if there's any addition that I'd like it is to emphasise this more strongly than ever, both points. The need to avoid both extremes. No pseudo-guru worship on the other hand, and on the other no spiritual pseudo-egalitarianism either.

"How do they prostrations and foundation yogas fit into the system of meditation?"

Well, the prostrations of course are one of the foundation yogas. There are four foundation yogas, four Mula yogas, that is to say, the Going for Refuge and prostration practice, the generation of the Bodhicitta, the offering of the Mandala and the visualisation of Vajrasattva with the recitation of his mantra. These are the four Mula yogas. So how do they fit in to the system of meditation? It depends how you do them. Let's take for instance the Going for Refuge and prostration practice. You can do it in a purely external fashion. You could do it as prostration therapy. This is another corker from one might say from our transatlantic Buddhist friends. Prostration therapy. Well, if you did it as prostration therapy well, that wouldn't be meditation in any form except maybe the most elementary concentration, if you did get around to doing the visualisation exercise. So it wouldn't fit into the system at all. But if you succeeded in having a good samatha type practice well, of course, yes, it would fit into the system of meditation. You could accommodate it within the second stage, the second level, that of emotional positivity, because great faith and great devotion would be inspired. But if you went even further than that because you also get a little of the sunyata type practice in this Mula yoga then you could even enter upon the third stage of meditation and then of course you conjure up, as it were, the figure of Padmasambhava to prostrate before so again that would bring you into the fourth stage even, the stage of spiritual rebirth. So where the prostration, where the Going for Refuge and prostration practice came within the system of meditation would depend to what extent you practised it or in what spirit you practised it. How far you are able to take it but it could accompany you, as it were, all the way through your practice of meditation.

It's slightly different for the other mula yogas. For instance the generation of the Bodhicitta clearly is a sort of transcendental experience. It comes one may say between the between the second and the third levels of, or stages of meditation and the Vajrasattva practice again that can accompany all the way depending on how you do it. Whether it's just a sort of concentration exercise or whether as a real samatha type of experience, with great faith and devotion, whether it leads you into the experience of sunyata and whether the visualisation of Vajrasattva himself represents for you the stage of spiritual rebirth. So it's very difficult to say well, it comes here or it comes there, it depends on the degree or extent to which you practice it. And I think probably that's the best that one can say with regard to that.

Voice: You didn't answer the question about Dharmapalas.

S: Oh, sorry. Yes. Let me go back then. Yes. Dharmapalas. Where do they fit in? Well, they do fit in. You've got the guru, the deva, the dakini and the dharmapala. So the guru, the deva, the dakini, they form a group, together. The dharmapala is, as it were, a little separate. Even though these are enumerated, very often as a set of four. In the tantra it is said everything goes by fours. So here also there's a set of four. But what is the prime point of difference between guru, deva and dakini on the one hand, and dharmapala on the other? The difference is this. The guru, deva and dakini are all, as it were, within the spiritual community. The guru is, of course, the spiritual community at its highest point. The deva also, is within the spiritual community. Is something practised within the spiritual

community by someone committed to the Dharma. It's the point at which he actually contacts the Dharma in his own experience as he practises, as a member of the spiritual community. And then again with regard to the dakini, well the dakini represents your real live spiritual contact with one another within the spiritual community. So guru, deva, dakini are all, as it were, intra-spiritual community.

But dharmapala is, as it were, extra-spiritual community. The dharmapala is within the spiritual community in the sense that he belongs to it. He's a sort of extension of a bodhisattva if you like, but where is he looking? He's not looking within the spiritual community as in the case of guru, deva, dakini, he's looking outside the spiritual community. He's looking outside into the world. He's a guardian, a guardian of the dharma. So the dharmapala is represented in two ways. He's always in a wrathful form and of course he's always surrounded with flames. So what does this represent. It sort of represents the impact of the spiritual community on the world. You might almost say, I don't like to use the word, but almost say the aggressive aspect of the spiritual community, using the word aggressive in a quite positive sense. It's not enough to be on the defensive where the world is concerned, you have to go out. Attack is the best method of defence and that's the dharmapala, as it were, attacking with his wrathful form and his halo of flames.

(End of side one side two)

Now why wrathful? Why wrathful? Dakinis in the ordinary sense, they're beautiful, smiling, peaceful, lovely. Because that's the nature of communication within the spiritual community, through higher emotions, higher feelings, but can you communicate like that with people outside? Is it possible? No. No. That sort of communication is possible within the spiritual community. Can you communicate with others outside the spiritual community with your finest, most delicate, most tender feelings, spiritual feelings? Is it possible? No. The prodigal blossoms will be nipped and withered. No. Instinctively, almost, you shrink back, you keep those sort of feelings for your communication within the spiritual community. Even if you were willing to communicate in that way, or felt like trying it would be very, very difficult indeed. So you can't really communicate with people outside the spiritual community through your higher more spiritual feelings. This just is not possible. With mettā, yes, ordinary mettā, emotional positivity but when it comes to the more purely spiritual, more refined, I almost said, sort of delicate feelings - though not delicate in a weak sense, you can't bring those into operation, you can't communicate through those. So what do you communicate through with people outside if you can't use your more refined higher spiritual emotions? There's a certain amount of positivity in the form of say cheerfulness, but are you going to convince them like that, are you going to convert them like that? No. How are you going to convert them? What's your medium of communication? What have you got in common? What have you got in common? What have you got in common? Well you've got in common abstract thought, ideas, concepts. These are common.

So there is a connection between wrath and intellectuality. There's a very interesting article by Dr. Conze called 'Love, Hate and Perfect Wisdom'. It's collected in one of his two volumes of Collected Essays. I don't know how many of you have seen this. I remember it very well because I published it originally in 'The Mahabodhi Journal' some twenty odd years ago. It's a very good essay and he points out that first of all psychologically there's a connection between hate and wisdom. You've all heard of the three main types - psychological types according to Buddhist tradition as described by Buddhaghosa in the Vissudhi Magga. You're supposed to be either a greed type, a hate type or a deluded type. You can take your pick. [Laughter] You're one or the other. But suppose we take a

look at the hate type. The hate type has got this tendency of aggressiveness, of smashing things, of breaking through things, but that's the characteristic of wisdom. So sublimated hate as it were becomes wisdom because wisdom pulverises the conditioned, it breaks through the conditioned, it sees through the conditioned, it smashes through the conditioned. So therefore it is said that wisdom is of the nature of hatred. It's a sort of transcendental equivalent of hatred. And in fact you find this. People of (Laughter), people of strong, penetrating, powerful intellect, what are they likely to be as personalities? A bit uncomfortable. A bit disagreeable. A bit difficult to get on with. But they've got this powerful, penetrating intellect. And the nice people, the people who are easy to get on with, affectionate, kindly, easy-going, which type are they likely to be. Greed type.

So you see there is this connection, or when more highly developed faith and devotion type. [Laughter] But you see there is this psychological connection established between the hate type and wisdom. So, in a way, wisdom is of the nature of hatred. It's a sort of sublimated hatred. So when you confront the world you can't bring your finer feelings into play, they'd be quite inappropriate. You bring your intellectuality into play. You bring your aggressiveness into play. In other words, in a sense, you bring your hatred into play. This is the only way in which you can communicate outside. This doesn't mean, of course, hating people outside, or anything like that, no. But it means that you communicate best from within the spiritual community outside through this, as it were, aggressive intellectuality, which doesn't mean aggressive, competitive in the ordinary sense, but a vigorous, outward going, uncompromising statement or exposition of what Buddhism stands for.

So hence the dharmapala. This is what the dharmapala does and of course, he is surrounded with this halo of flames which is his burning, fiery, wrathful, you could say, intellectuality. He takes the offensive. So this is what the dharmapala represents. It's this outward going aspect of the spiritual community. The outward going aspect of the bodhisattva. Going forth into the samsara with his sword of wisdom and brandishing his sword of wisdom and saying, well, this is what Buddhism stands for, this is what Buddhism teaches. But he has to put it initially in, more or less, intellectual terms. That is the point of departure until he succeeded in, sort of, winning a hearing and people become a bit sympathetic, a bit receptive, and then maybe the finer feelings and emotions and more spiritual emotions can be brought into play. But we shouldn't underestimate this aspect of, sort of, aggressive intellectuality. But of course you must be a bodhisattva, sort of. It mustn't be just ordinary human competitive aggressiveness, it must be a clear product of your own personal insight and experience, just very straightforwardly communicated. This is basically what the dharmapala represents. (Pause)

"Does the bringing together of the sexes still act as the creator of unuseful tensions and do the women still act as a diluting factor to the level reached on, say, a retreat, or was this only relevant at the time, say, of the discussion of the "Mind in Buddhist Psychology" seminar?"
(Laughter)

I'd say there's been some change as regards unuseful tensions within the Order. There has been some change. I mean an improvement within the Order in this respect. Within the Movement as a whole I'm rather doubtful. Mainly because into the Movement as a whole new people are constantly coming with these sort of tensions, these unuseful tensions, which they bring with them from their ordinary lives and the outside society. So I therefore answer to this, yes, an improvement as regards the Order. I think not as regards the Movement as a whole.

"What would you say is the importance of culture in a place where we may consider setting

up a centre, all other things being favourable?"

I'm not quite sure what is meant here by the importance of culture. I take it it could mean one of two things. How important a factor would the local culture be, or how important would cultural activities be among the activities, the total activities of the centre. One could take it in either of these two ways. I think that if one is going to set up a centre, a centre of the FWBO, in some place where the FWBO hasn't as yet gone. Supposing one was to set it up, say, in India, or say in Malaysia, one would certainly have to take the local culture into consideration and bear that in mind. Whether one decided to set up cultural activities as a sort of communication, well, again that would depend very much where one was, and how important they were locally and all that sort of thing. I don't think I could say more than that on this particular question.

"What is neighbourhood or access concentration?"

This is quite simple and straightforward. Neighbourhood or access concentration, upachara samadhi it's called, is sort of half way to apana samadhi or full absorption which is synonymous with the dhyana states. You could say that neighbourhood or access concentration is sort of half way between your ordinary, relatively distracted state of mind and the full concentration that you get when you enter upon the first dhyana. In terms of the exercise I mentioned the other day, supposing you are concentrating on that red disc which is external to you, a material red disc made of material flowers, the concentration that you get when you are gazing at that with your eyes open is just ordinary concentration, ordinary waking state concentration. But supposing then you close your eyes and you manage to reproduce that red disc in your mind's eye, you manage to visualise it, and then you become fully concentrated upon that disregarding all external stimuli and with no wandering thoughts - that is access concentration. And when, out of that visualised red disc there rises say a luminous disc and you become much more intensely concentrated on that and all sorts of positive mental events start arising then that is the beginning of the full concentration. So access or neighbourhood concentration comes half way between the ordinary, waking state type concentration and the full absorption or the full concentration of the samadhi or dhyana state. (Pause)

"What are the conditions under which direct mind to mind communication occurs?"

It depends to a great extent on the level. In the case of ordinary mind to mind communication regularity of contact, familiarity, seems to be the important factor. You find a sort of telepathy taking place very often between people who've been associated with one another quite closely and regularly over a number of years. You find it especially perhaps with husband and wife. If you just look around among your acquaintances who are married you might discover that quite a number of them who've been married say for twenty, thirty, forty years have had from time to time some sort of telepathic experience between themselves. I remember that during the war my own parents used to say that at eight o'clock every evening, this was during the period of the Blitz in London they used to telepathically communicate. Whether they actually did or not I don't know, but they certainly believed that they did and I think that there is quite a lot of this sort of thing on this sort of level between quite ordinary people who don't think very much of it and especially, as I said, between married couples, just because they have been together so long and are very much on the same wavelength and know each other so well.

But I don't expect the question really pertains to that, very likely the question pertains to something of, as it were, a more spiritual nature. But here again to some extent the same conditions hold good.

A sort of initial regularity of contact, being on the same wavelength, as it were, especially spiritually speaking, interested in the same spiritual things, devoted to the same spiritual things, and also intense concentration. If you're intensely concentrating on some other person out of a sort of spiritual motivation and if that person is also concentrating on you or on the thought of you in the same sort of way then the chances are there will be some sort of telepathic contact between you according to the level on which you are, the telepathic contact will take place on that level. I'd say it's a quite, in a way, ordinary sort of thing, I'd almost say it's bound to occur. I know that within the Order as a whole there's quite a bit of sort of occasional telepathy going on and people don't take all that much, as it were, notice of it. Certainly don't try to develop it. But when everybody is on the same wavelength and their minds are concentrated on much the same things - you know, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, study, teaching, Avalokitesvara, Manjughosa, Vajrapani, Padmasambhava - when all their thoughts are sort of vibrating on the same sort of wavelength it's inevitable that a sort of thought may flash around the whole circle, a sort of inspiration may flash around the whole circle and there may really, sort of genuinely be in a sort of telepathic or rapport.

This is only to be expected. And sometimes I've noticed that a sort of idea, or thought, or feeling wave that seems to go around the whole Movement not necessarily by word of mouth or not necessarily communicated by letter or anything anyone has said very much or written about very much, but just because they're all on that same wavelength it seems. A few people are on it quite strongly and from them it seems to pass around the whole Order and sort of back again. Maybe not always including everybody but affecting, as I know quite well from the contact I have with people and the letters I get, affecting quite a number of Members of the Order. So that this sort of telepathic contact does seem to go on quite a bit of the time. So it's not anything we need make very much of. As I said it's almost to be expected. In fact one might say that if it didn't occur, well, we ought to start wondering why.

"Could you say something about the cosmic going for refuge which you talked about last night?"

That's rather difficult. I really said all that I was prepared to say or able to say for the present at the conclusion of that lecture. Perhaps I should just say this. That from a strictly scientific point of view it might be considered a rather fanciful idea. Not that that really disproves it in any way. It's sort of quasi-vitalist, you might say. It does posit a sort of energy coursing through the whole of creation and seeking as it were ever higher and higher levels. And as I said the night before last, looking back over the whole evolutionary process it does seem quite difficult to believe that it is all the result of accident in the strict literal statistical sort of sense. You've all heard the famous story about, you know, if you set a sufficient number of monkeys pounding a sufficient number of typewriters then by sheer accident, sooner or later, statistically they're bound to produce the entire works of Shakespeare. So the accident theory of evolution is a bit like that. That sooner or later it was a statistical possibility or even a statistical inevitability that consciousness should eventually be produced because eventually that particular possibility or permutation would have to be reached, have to be realised, have to be actualised.

But I understand that it has been shown - I've got several books on this subject - that the rate at which evolution has occurred cannot be accounted for in mathematical and statistical terms. It's occurred much too quickly. The period involved is much too short for it to be the result of that sort of accident. So that it does seem that there is a sort of urge, a sort of immanent urge, as it were, such as the vitalists posited, at work in the whole of creation, in the whole of material life, seeking ever higher and higher levels or degrees of realisation for itself. Ever higher and higher degrees or levels

of manifestation and expression and eventually for the time being at least, culminating in homo sapiens and that this seems to me to constitute a sort of Going for Refuge. You as it were, dedicate yourself to, you commit yourself to at this lower level, of course, in a very blind sort of unconscious way, to something higher. What you are seeking is something higher. And it seems that as we're looking at the evolutionary process, from the very beginning all the time life is seeking something higher. Life is essentially a self-transcending process. To live is to want to transcend yourself. And that is Going for Refuge because you Go for Refuge to something higher. You want to die for yourself and live through something else which is higher than you at present are.

So one can look back and , as it were, read into this the whole significance of the Going for Refuge in a sort of immanent way. In man, what is spiritual life? What in its specifically Buddhist form is Going for Refuge? In creation as a whole is simply the whole evolutionary process advancing from lower to higher and ever higher levels culminating in, as I said, for the time being, us. And we go for refuge, we carry the whole thing further. We embark upon the higher evolution. We devote ourselves to our individual spiritual development as members of a spiritual community. We carry the whole process one step further. So therefore you can talk of the evolutionary process as a sort of lower Going for Refuge just as you talk of the Going for Refuge as a higher evolutionary process. You see what I'm getting at? I'm reading the one back into the other as it were. But perhaps that's all I have to say on that at present.

Right, one more question, or rather two questions and then we really must end and that in fact is the lot. (Pause)

"Are there definite outside evil influences out to harm us of a non-material nature?"

Well, yes, I believe there are actually and that these are what Buddhist tradition calls maras. I don't think that they're as powerful as the Christian Satan or anything of that sort. I did write somewhere that they were mischievous rather than wicked. But maybe a bit wicked too, sometimes. I've a little experience of these things myself. First I'll tell you a couple of experiences, maybe three experiences, to give you some idea about these things. I'm not going to dwell on it too long because to dwell on it too long creates the wrong sort of atmosphere. It's as though they hear you talking about them and they (Laughter) come and listen. But I remember - when was this? - in 1944, when I was in Delhi, I started meditating, I meditated for the first time off my own bat, in a way quite wrongly, without any teacher or any guidance. This was when I was still in the Army. I was about 19. So I sat down and I meditated according to some instructions I'd found in a book. And I got on with it quite well and I was having a sort of meditative experience, this was late one night, and suddenly there appeared in front of me a head or face floating in the middle of the air, just a head, like a severed head, and it was the head of a quite old man. I can see him even now. About sixty and he had a grey stubble, whitish stubble here and a whitish stubble here, and his complexion was a sort of dirty, yellowish-brown and lots of wrinkles and the impression created was that here was a man, if you can call it a man, who had spent all his life evilly and it all showed in his face, it had left marks and wrinkles, just like the picture of Dorian Gray. It didn't occur to me at the time but this is what I thought afterwards. And there was this head about six or eight feet in front of me floating and he laughed a very nasty sneering laugh. Ha! Ha! (Laughter) He said: "You're wasting your time meditating, you're wasting your time," he said. "There's nothing in the universe except matter", and he sort of spat the word out like that. "There's nothing but matter, there's no such thing as spirit." So I'm afraid one of my own characteristics has been, for better or for worse, I've never been at a loss for an answer or very rarely. (Laughter) And I said: "There is something more than matter. I know

because I'm experiencing it now." [Laughter] Whereupon he disappeared. So (Laughter and applause), so, believe it or not, believe it or not, I met him years later. Believe it not.

When I was in Nepal in - when would this be? - 1952. 1952 I was invited to Nepal to attend, to take part in the reception being given in Kathmandu to the relics of Sariputra and Mogallana. I was part of the Mahabodhi society party and went with the relics from Calcutta to Kathmandu. So among other things in the course of the whole proceedings various public meetings were arranged and various people gave lectures, various visiting Buddhist bhikkhus and others gave lectures. So I remember among other meetings there was one in a big hall and there were two speakers. One was Badant Anandakoshilyayan, an Indian monk, and the other was myself. So we each gave our talk or lecture. I think he spoke in Hindi and then I spoke in English. There was quite a good large audience, about four hundred people and at the end there were questions. So a question came from the back of the hall, from someone we couldn't see and he was asking in a very unpleasant tone of voice about the Atman because we being Buddhist we had nothing to say about the Atman, Buddhism teaching anatmavada, so this question came and I allowed Badant Anandakoshilyayan to answer it, he being senior to me and that being the only proper thing, but he didn't answer it very properly in my opinion. He sort of made light of the question and didn't really face up to it, didn't put forth his dharmapala side.

So the question sort of subsided. Nothing much happened. But then, just as we stepped down from the platform the audience opened out in two halves, very respectfully to allow through the questioner and a little man came, sort of tottering forward, and it was my old friend the mara. And I recognised him at once, exactly the same face and we shook hands and I'm quite sure that he recognised me and guess who he was? He was the chief Brahmin high priest, the rajpuragit of the king and he had a very strange dry sort of hand. And as I said immediately I recognised him. The face was exactly the same and it was him and he recognised me. Now explain that how you will. I don't offer any explanation. This is my personal experience.

All right, next experience (Laughter). London. Believe it or not there are several experiences connected with London. I give you only one. This was when I was, oh let me think, I'm not quite sure which year it was, it was either just before or just after I started the FWBO. That might be significant, I hadn't thought of that. But I was on the Northern Line and I was still wearing my bhikkhu robes all the time. So I was seated just sort of here. (Laughter) And just a few yards along there was the doors, the nearest doors and there was a man standing in those doors with his back towards me, all the time. So I was sort of looking around for my one person in twenty, as it were, (Laughter) and I looked, I happened just to look across there and I saw this man standing in that door and there was nothing remarkable about his back, just dressed in a dark suit and I thought to myself, and I knew at once, that's not a human being, that's a little devil. I knew at once. I can't tell you how but I knew. So I kept my eye on him. [Laughter] And he didn't turn round. And he had not turned round the whole time. I saw only his back but I knew as definitely as I knew anything, that's not a human being. These sort of words came into my mind. That's a little devil. In other words a mara.

So I kept my eye on him, so after two stations he made to get out. As he got out he turned right round to me and 'Ha! Ha!' and he walked away. (Laughter) as if to say well yes, I know that you're watching me, but you can't catch me. And so I do believe that there are these definite outside evil influences out to harm us of a non-material nature. But as I've said I don't like to dwell upon these things too much. I don't usually talk about them because, well, for the reason I mentioned, it's better to talk about bodhisattvas and dakinis.

All right. This comes from the discussion of evil influences in Dhyana for Beginners. I take it I didn't mention any of these things in Dhyana for Beginners seminar, did I? I hope I'm not repeating. Did I mention any of them?

Voice: You mentioned the last one?

S: The last one. Well, there you are. So I do have various other experiences of these things but I think, in a way, the less we think and even the less we talk about them the better. But these forces, these sort of personalised, I won't say evil, but maybe harmful forces, they are around. But also, of course, there are the sort of personalised good forces and bodhisattva-like forces so it's much better to think about them and to open oneself to their influence.

Anyway that is all your questions, and I've actually dealt with all those. Some of them perhaps not completely satisfactorily for obvious reasons but they have been taped and I don't know if any of them will ever be edited and published anywhere but if they are, no doubt I will have an opportunity to correct and amplify them wherever necessary. Anyway time is really up, it's just as well I didn't try to give that talk as well. We're a little over time in any case so maybe we could have the bell rung in just ten minutes and then we assemble in the shrine for our usual puja and meditation.

Subhuti: Thanks very much indeed Bhante.

S: Thanks. (Applause)

(End of section on tape. Note towards the end of tape additional material as typed below - probably from another seminar - possibly The Manjughosa Stuti Sadhana?)

S: I assume that the stuti? was composed by an Indian teacher called Shri Jnana Gunapala and that that stuti was incorporated in or arranged as a sadhana by the Tibetan teacher Dorje Dzoncha, this is my assumption. But I've not been able to find out anything about either of these. (Pause) On the other hand Shri Jnana Gunapala may not be the name of an original teacher but simply the title of the stuti and the stuti might have been actually composed by that Tibetan teacher, that is possible. (Pause) But certainly material is thoroughly traditional. (Pause)

Vajradaka: Is it part of the systematic teaching, systematically part of a training. For example you have the prerequisite to go through the stuti with a teacher.

S: No, it isn't very systematic in that sort of way. One of the features of Tantric practice, in a way, though only in a way, isn't systematic. You don't necessarily get a higher initiation because you're more highly developed, or a lower one before because you're less developed. You may get a higher initiation because you're less developed and you need an extra charge, as it were. But Tantra doesn't work in the way that maybe the Hinayana and the Mahayana works because say, it tends to follow the path of irregular steps quite a lot. I'll check whether I have in my notes any details of the lineage of this practice. I might have. (Pause)

(End of tape)

*Transcribed and typed by Paul Dore
Checked and contented by Silabhadra*

January 1994