

## SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - VINEHALL MEN'S ORDER/MITRA EVENT 1981

#### (VINEHALL 1)

**SANGHARAKSHITA:** This week we've had lectures, we've had symposia, tonight is question, and hopefully, (Laughter) answer night. As everybody knows, I've invited questions and I've invited them in writing. I've invited them in writing for two reasons. First of all, so that you can frame your questions more precisely than you might have framed them had you done so verbatim; and secondly, so that, if I had all the questions in writing before me I could sort of sort them out into groups, and deal with them in groups, because some of the questions do overlap and are related, or are interrelated.

For instance, I've got a whole group of questions on the positive group, as we may call it. I've got another group on the FWBO, the Movement. I've got another group of questions on men and women, and their evolutionary process in general. I've got another couple of questions on problems of practical life. A couple of questions about two of my own kalyana mitras. A question about communication. A question about stream entry. A question about meditation. A question about Desert Island Discs. (Uproarious laughter). I must say, I rather liked the idea of that desert island, in some moods anyway. I'm not quite sure where to start but I'd better sort of play safe and start with the questions on different aspects of the positive group, though that serves as a very approximate description. For instance, the first questions says:

*"So far, the emphasis in the Friends has been towards people living a full-time spiritual life by involvement in communities and co-operatives. At this stage in the development of the FWBO, would it now be appropriate to clarify and strengthen the role of those individuals who are unable or unwilling to live a full-time spiritual life?"*

And in the same way another question is:

*"Please comment on the family with special reference to children and their religious influence in relation to the Friends. What is the place of the family in the Ideal Society?"*

and *"Please say something about the centripetal aspect of a community or communities around the same Centre. How a community housing co-operative fits into the pattern of the new society, as this has aspects of both a co-op and community."*

So quite an interrelationship of questions there. First of all, the first one I read. "So far, a strong emphasis within the Friends has been towards people leading a full time spiritual life by involvement in communities and co-operatives. At this stage in the development of the FWBO, would it now be appropriate to clarify and strengthen the role of those individuals who are unable or unwilling to live a full-time spiritual life."

This obviously raises the question at the very beginning; what does one mean by a full time spiritual life? The questioner seems to assume that you can lead a full time spiritual life by involvement in

communities and co-operatives, but there seems to be some doubt in the questioner's mind whether you can live or lead a full time spiritual life if you're not involved in communities or co-operatives. Well, in a sense of course you can because you can live a full time spiritual life if you're away on solitary retreat. You're not involved then in either a community or a co-operative. If you are meditating and studying the Dharma, I think few people would disagree that you were living a full time spiritual life, even though you weren't part of a co-op or part of a community.

I think though that probably what the questioner has in mind is the position of someone who is living at home, with family, job, and so on. Is it possible for such a person to lead a full time spiritual life? Well, again, that raises the question, what does one mean by a full time spiritual life? Supposing you're living in a community, a spiritual community, all right, you're leading a spiritual life presumably when you meditate, that is, if you meditate successfully. You're presumably leading a spiritual life when you study the Dharma in your spiritual community. But supposing you're cooking, are you leading a spiritual life? Well, perhaps you are, perhaps you are not. If you're cooking mindfully, if you're cooking with awareness, if you're cooking with love for those for whom you are cooking, yes, that cooking activity can be included in your spiritual life.

So, I don't think one can think of the full time spiritual life quite in terms of a life occupied with certain specific activities only. To some extent, at least, it depends upon your attitude to those activities. So I think one should think rather in terms of making the best use of whatever opportunities you have. Probably no one really leads a full time spiritual life, even in a co-op. All right, you're leading a spiritual life if you're in a co-op to the extent that you're practising Right Livelihood, but are you every minute practising Right Livelihood? Supposing for instance you're selling beans over the counter, well presumably that's Right Livelihood. But supposing in the course of your communication in the course a co-op meeting you get a bit annoyed and you swear at somebody, are you leading at that moment a spiritual life? Presumably you are lapsing from it.

So I don't think there's any situation which if you're in it absolutely guarantees that you're leading a full time spiritual life nor any situation short of a downright unethical or criminal one, that guarantees that if you're in it you're not leading a spiritual life. You must make the best use of your opportunities, and not think of the spiritual life too much in terms of the specific form that it takes. We know very well from our study of Buddhism, unfortunately, in the East, there can be very worldly, pseudo-spiritual, or rather, perhaps, religious or ecclesiastical life, which has the trappings of spirituality but not the reality. And in the same way one can sometimes find in the East also, someone who is leading an apparently worldly life, but, at the same time, making full use of spiritual opportunities and making spiritual progress.

So, perhaps that is as much, at the moment, as can usefully be said on that particular topic, in answer to that particular question.

All right, to be more specific, to come to another question, What about the family?

*"What is the place of the family in the Ideal Society?"*

I'd say, in a sense, no place at all. There's no room in the Ideal Society for the family. By which I mean of course the nuclear family, with which we are - some of us so painfully - acquainted. I hope that in the Ideal Society the family as we know it will disappear altogether. Of course, even in the Ideal Society there'll be men and women and children. So, what'll you do with them, especially what will you do with the children? Well my sort of plan or my ideal, if you like, goes something like this.

The children, whether boys or girls, will remain with their mothers for the first few years of their lives. The mothers will be living in women's communities, in this case living with other women who have, or are thinking of having, in some cases at least, children of their own. So the children stay with the mothers, until in the case of the boys, they're about 7 or 8 years of age at the most, and they then happily transfer to a men's community.

The men's community should be a special kind of men's community, that is to say, specially oriented to the needs of the boys, with some men sort of full time fathers and uncles, providing at the same time, education. So that the boys would be living in, or would be based on, because contact with members of the opposite sex would not be excluded, but would be based on a men's community cum school, cum playground, cum playgroup, it would be something quite delightful for which we don't even have a term or a name at present. And, they would as it were, graduate from that men's community and take up whatever line of life, work, responsibility, vocation, that they cared to, either within the FWBO structure or, if they so wished, in the outside world. They should be perfectly free to make their own choice, whatever their choice may be, they make it as a relatively independent, responsible, emotionally positive, young individual.

*"Please comment on the family with special reference to children and their religious influences in relation to the Friends."*

Well, I've partially answered that question already but what about their religious influences? Presumably, the influences within the Friends to which they are to be exposed. One thing that I'm very clear about - I'm not clear about some things in connection with this particular topic - one thing that I've very clear about is that there should be no question of indoctrinating children with Buddhism. That is not to be the attitude at all. You can't make children into Buddhists. Only individuals can be Buddhists and children are not yet Individuals, though if they are properly brought up, properly educated, they've a very good chance of becoming Individuals. So, what do you do about the children? Well, you don't teach them Buddhism at a tender age, you don't try to ram the Four Noble Truths down their little throats [Laughter] or you don't get them to commit the Twelve Nidanas to memory and recite them as soon as they can speak. No, not that.

But a child who is born and who is brought up in a Buddhist community of one kind or another, either that of the women or that of the men, should be surrounded all the time by a really friendly and emotionally positive, warm, helpful supportive atmosphere, that is the most important thing. And gradually introduced to Buddhism in a more specific sense, taken along to festivals, allowed to join in festivals, allowed to join in the pujas, to make offerings, to join in the chanting, or singing if you have it - children really love these things. To attend name giving ceremonies, any kind of ceremony, anything colourful and bright, and of a celebratory nature the child really loves and enjoys joining in. And eventually of course, the child will ask you questions about the Dharma, about Buddhism, about those strange people outside who don't seem to be Buddhists [Laughter], and you'll just answer the questions plainly and sensibly and objectively, and allow the child to make his or her own choice in due course. But, on no account, in my opinion, should there be any indoctrination of the Christian or Muslim type.

All right, shifting to somewhat different ground with the last question group.

*"Please say something about the centripetal aspects of communities around the same Centre. How a community housing co-operative fits into the pattern of the new society because this*

*has aspects of both the co-op and community."*

So, centripetal aspects of communities around the same Centre. I think most of you are acquainted with the difference between a centrifugal force or tendency and a centripetal one. A centrifugal one goes from the centre outwards and a centripetal one goes from outwards in. So, presumably, the centripetal aspects of communities are the aspects which cause the community or communities to draw in upon themselves. Because after all, you're living in a community with other people and, yes, you're very much occupied with one another, you're very much occupied with your life together, the way in which you relate, this is necessary, this is positive, this is healthy. But what about the Centre nearby? The questioner seems to envisage a number of communities sort of surrounding a Centre. Well, it's up to you, it's up to the community, the members of the community. You may choose to be involved with the activities of that Centre and contribute members to the running of that Centre and supporting classes, or you may not, it's up to you. You may decide that at one stage of your existence, for the sake of the members of the community, community life is more important and more to be stressed. At another time you might feel that the community is getting a bit too self-centred, so to speak, and needs to take an active part in the activities of the nearest Centre.

It's as though a balance needs to be maintained but you mustn't become too centripetal otherwise you sort of forget about the larger movement of which you're a part. You mustn't become too centrifugal otherwise you cease to have a community life at all. So, be aware of both tendencies and try to hold them in balance in the long run, even though at a specific period one may predominate, or it may be desirable that one should predominate. More perhaps than that one can't say.

So what about the community housing co-operative? How does that fit into the pattern? It's not really a question of fitting into the pattern. It's not that when something new arises or develops it's got to fit into the old pattern. No, the old pattern's also got to be modified. There's that too. So, enlarge the old pattern to accommodate the new development. So here, as the questioner rightly says, a housing co-operative has aspects of both the co-op and the community. So one could treat that as a new development. Usually we speak in terms of the Centre, the community and the co-op but a housing co-operative in some ways, partakes of the nature of both. It's like the hero, he's part god and he's part man. So I don't think there's really a problem here. Let the overall pattern be sufficiently elastic to accommodate this kind of new development.

All right, so much for those questions, they go on to an allied group. All right, the next two questions have come from the same person and are prefaced by a bit of explanation or comment.

*"Presumably, the greatest danger the spiritual community has to constantly face is that of its degeneration into a group. In recent years there has been some emphasis on establishing a positive group in the FWBO. No matter how good and positive the positive group is, it is still a group. I believe that there will always be only a fine dividing line between a positive group and a negative one, a positive group can so easily become a negative one."*

This is true, insofar as the positive group does not contain within itself a spiritual community, especially a transcendental community. I have said before that really in the long run there is no existence of a positive group without a spiritual community at its heart or as its nucleus. So:

*"My first question is: What do you consider we need to be constantly on the lookout for to ensure that the spiritual community does not become a mere group. What are the first signs*

*that will indicate the rot may be setting in?"*

Second question:

*"Do you think that some of the more experienced Order Members can ever be in a situation where they have sufficient influence to manipulate, whether consciously or unconsciously, the positive group around them for their own ends, i.e. to maintain a certain position on the hierarchical ladder?" [Laughter]*

Hm, right first question first. Yes, we certainly need to be constantly on the lookout to ensure that the spiritual community does not become a mere group. So what are the first signs that will indicate that the rot may be setting in? I think this question is really answered when we remember the definition of the spiritual community. I mean, what is the spiritual community, or how do we distinguish between the spiritual community on the one hand and the group, even the positive group, on the other. The spiritual community consists of individuals. So, when you notice that there are fewer individuals around, or individuals are disappearing. By individuals, of course, you don't mean individualists. When everybody starts acting collectively, as a mass, and not as a free association of individuals, well then, you can start thinking that the rot has well and truly set in. So, it's the absence of individuality.

If you start noticing that people aren't thinking and speaking and acting as individuals, that they are simply identifying themselves with a group, that they are group members now, not individuals, then, yes, the rot has set in. One could give all sorts of other indications but they really all boil down to this. You know, you might for instance, visit a community, you might feel there's a very happy, positive atmosphere but the people are not acting, they're not functioning as individuals, so that it is not a spiritual community.

So, second question. "Do you think that some of the more experienced Order Members can ever be in a situation where they have sufficient influence to manipulate, whether consciously or unconsciously, the positive group around them for their own ends, i.e. to maintain a certain position in the hierarchical ladder." I think this question's probably a little unfortunately phrased. (Laughter) One is presumably envisaging a situation within the positive group outside the FWBO, let's say outside the FWBO. Supposing an Order Member is a teacher, and he's a good teacher in a really good school where there's a good positive atmosphere. So what will be his effect? What will be his influence there. Would it be a good idea for say an Order Member to be in that sort of situation and, the questioner says, manipulate whether consciously or unconsciously. Well manipulate is a word with a certain connotation, perhaps we should avoid it. And as for unconsciously, well, if you're really an Individual, and an Order Member should be an Individual, you won't do anything in fact, something of that sort you couldn't do unconsciously. You would be in the midst of that positive group and certainly it would be a good thing if you as an Order Member, as an individual within that positive group were able to influence, were able to exert a positive influence. By positive influence meaning, an influence on the side of Individuality. That is to say, if you're a teacher, all right, get to know your pupils, treat them as individuals, encourage them to think for themselves, in that way you, as an individual teacher in that school would be influencing the boys or the girls who came into contact with you in the direction of individuality.

Of course, it might not be so easy or simple or straightforward as that, the headmaster might get wind of what you were doing and you might even be asked not to function in that sort of way. One could

only try, one could only see. But such a way of functioning is possible, assuming that the group within which the Order member, within which the individual, is functioning, within which the Order Member is functioning is really a positive group. I doubt very much whether you could function like that say within a political party, because the political party seems, by its very nature to be not at all positive, even quite negative on our terms, and political parties are quite big, they wield quite a lot of power, and it's very unlikely that you as one solitary individual could do very much to counteract those negative tendencies. But if you do see a positive situation, a positive group situation, outside the Friends, into which you as an Individual can usefully enter and exert a wholesome influence, well, it's your right, to use that expression, to do that, to enter into that situation if you think that is a good thing, and a useful thing for you to do. It certainly can't be ruled out altogether.

All right, I could say quite a lot more on that but we do have quite a lot more questions to get through. So let me leave it for the moment.

Some questions of the same nature on roughly the same area. No, I think there'll be a transition to the next group. I think we'll jump to something a bit different, though still connected with the positive group and the FWBO, and so on. A question about India, actually.

*"Do you have any thoughts on the possibility or inevitability of a backlash by the Hindu population in India against FWBO India?"*

Well the brief answer to that is that I don't. I don't anticipate any such backlash against the FWBO specifically. There's quite a lot of trouble in India at the moment, involving ex-untouchables and even Buddhists. I did happen to pick up today, I don't know to whom it belonged, the current issue of 'New Society'. Whose was that, it was left lying about? (Silence) 'New Society'? (Unintelligible voice followed by laughter) There was an article in that about the happenings in Bihar, affecting ex-untouchable Buddhists and involving, in a way, the Bodhgaya temple itself. It's a very interesting article, I'm going to ask Subhuti to procure a copy of that issue, because we ought really to study the situation. But I don't anticipate any backlash by the Hindu population in India against FWBO India. Well, you might ask why I don't anticipate? That, in a way, is not an easy question to answer without really knowing the situation or, without you, say, knowing the situation there.

We have in India as our most active, so to speak, full-time workers, Lokamitra and Purna, and they being the most active workers, if there was to be any backlash one would expect that it would be directed against them because they're the sort of spearhead. But, again, I don't think that will happen, for several reasons. I did suggest quite strongly to Lokamitra before he went out that he kept up any friendships that he had or could make outside the ex-untouchable Buddhist community, and I said I attached great importance to that. It is possible to make friends with some Hindus who are quite sympathetic in a way, up to a point, with Buddhism. And it's quite good to have friends in these sort of circles. So that, in time of need one can, so to speak, pull a few strings, or get things done, or have oneself looked after even.

Also there's another point, that Hindus may not like the Untouchables, or ex-untouchables becoming Buddhists, but they're very happy when Westerners become Buddhists. Maybe that's a bit paradoxical; because they see Buddhism as part of their Indian, even Hindu, culture. So if a Westerner becomes a Buddhist, they regard it, rather ethnocentrically, as a bit of a feather in their cap. So for that reason, by virtue of the fact that Lokamitra comes from England and Purna comes from New Zealand, it's very, very unlikely that there's going to be any backlash against them.

Because Hindus will be only too pleased that ex-Christians are now following an Indian religion. And I think that if we're a bit diplomatic and a bit tactful, we can even win the support and even the friendship of some Hindus. I think though the orthodox Hindus, especially the orthodox Brahmins, do treat the ex-untouchables so badly in almost all cases, we ourselves have to be very careful - in fact, the ex-untouchables themselves have to be very careful if they possibly can - not to develop an attitude of antagonism or hostility towards the Hindus as a whole, especially towards individual Hindus we may happen to meet. They can be quite friendly people and they might even help us in our work.

So we should make contacts with them wherever we can. Also, another point is that the FWBO in India, the Trailokya Bauddha Maha Sangha, while working predominantly with the ex-untouchable Buddhists, is by no means confined to them. That is to say, we don't work only for the ex-untouchable Buddhists to the total exclusion of everybody else. One of the reasons why the ex-untouchables became Buddhists was to escape from the caste system. So, they can only do that if the caste system is broken down. If, having become Buddhists, they have contact with only Buddhists who were once ex-Untouchables, then even though they call themselves, even though they are Buddhists, in a sense they've not broken out of the caste system. Do you see what I mean? You're just a sort of ex-untouchable Buddhist ghetto in Indian society. You're still another caste, even though you call yourselves Buddhists. So this is why I sometimes used to say in India, in India it's impossible for anybody to be Buddhist unless everybody is Buddhist. You see what I mean? Yes? Because so long as the caste system persists, you, the Buddhists, will be treated as a caste. So if you don't want to be treated as a caste, you must break down the whole caste system. So you can't break down the caste system merely by converting ex-untouchables to Buddhism, they will be untouchable Buddhists then in the eyes of the caste Hindus. You have to convert the Hindus too, the caste Hindus too.

And actually, we have got some caste Hindu friends, and at least one may become an Order Member sometime. So we want to do this, we want to have in the Order in India, not just ex-untouchables, but, ex-caste Hindus, too, ex-Brahmins, we're open to all. So if we have within our movement there not only the ex-untouchables but also some ex-caste Hindus, well in a sense, we'll have a foothold in the enemy camp. And they will have their friends and relations and they can pull a few strings. So, in that way, it is unlikely I think that we shall ever suffer a backlash. And also, we mustn't be, as it were, provocative. We mustn't go out of our way to annoy the Hindus, who are, after all, in the majority, and just quietly pursue our way and do what we have to do, without, deliberately at least, upsetting anybody. Not until we're strong enough to do that. (Laughter) Keep a low profile, at least for the time being.

All right, we go on to another group of questions, in a way.

*"It is often said within the FWBO, that one can lose contact with one's feminine side through unknowingly projecting it onto a woman/women."*

Alright, first question:

*"To what extent do you think this is true?"*

What a question! [Laughter] To what extent for whom? All right, second question:

*"Is it possible to experience one's feminine aspect at all in the company of, or in a relationship with, women?" (Laughter).*

Three:

*"Would you please tell me what signs or clues to look for, so I can make myself aware of the fact that I'm projecting my feminine aspect in a given situation, or to enable me to assure myself that I am not doing this."*

Four: - he's really serious about this matter! (Laughter)

*"Why do you think the FWBO attracts a greater number of men than women at the present time."*

Five:

*"What conditions must be created before mixed communities and co-ops become equally attractive alternatives to single sex enterprises?"*

Six:

*"Do you think that the above conditions are ever likely to be created? If so, at what stage in the FWBO's development do you think this will be?"*

The questioner seems to think I'm a sort of Buddhist Old Moore. (Laughter)

B. I like the way they're neatly tabulated.

*"What do you think are the most significant obstacles we will be confronted with as a movement and as individuals in the future?"*

I really ought to have brought my crystal ball. Well, yes, it is often said that within the FWBO that one can lose contact with one's feminine side through unconsciously projecting it onto a woman/women. It's very often said. Sometimes I think it's too often said. But I'm not going to question the terms of the question. This is a sort of set of concepts, this is a way of looking at things with which many of us are operating quite usefully and quite helpfully. So I'm not going to question the terms of the question.

So, "To what extent do you think this is true?" Well, it's true to quite a large extent with the majority of people, the majority of men, that is to say. And "Is it possible to experience one's feminine aspect at all in the company of or in relationship with women?" I say, well, a short answer, yes, to some extent.

And "Would you please tell me what signs or clues to look for so I can make myself aware of the fact that I'm projecting my feminine aspect in a given situation or to enable me to assure myself that I'm not doing this?" I think this is, in a way, the most important of these questions from the practical point of view. I think the signs or clues are pretty obvious. When you project, when you project part of yourself onto another person, whether in this particular way or in some other way, what happens is

that you unconsciously regard or treat or perhaps even consciously regard or treat that person as part of yourself. You do not permit them independence. You do not permit them separate being. You do not permit them individuality. You want to chain them to you, to yourself and therefore you chain yourself to them. You've invested a portion of your being in them. So they're not allowed to go away. They're not allowed to run away.

So the signs or clues you are to look for lie mainly in this area. If the other person in this situation goes away, leaves you, maybe for somebody else, maybe just to do something else, and you feel sort of split or torn as though a portion of yourself had been torn away and therefore feel desperately anxious, upset and so on, then you can be sure that you've been projecting in this case - with regard to women - you've been projecting, for want of a better term, your own feminine aspect. If you feel that you're losing part of yourself when the other person goes away, that you don't really exist properly any more, you're only half here, that I think is the most important of the signs or clues.

And it happens not only in the man/woman situation but in other situations as when we project, as we were told about the other evening, your own responsibility, or your responsibility for yourself onto another person so that when that person goes away or isn't around you don't know what to do, you feel helpless or lost, and so on. So this is the main thing. So if you can't leave that other person, if you can't allow that other person to leave you or to function independently or do what they want to do without feeling threatened and lost and absent, well then you know that you are projecting, whether it's projecting your feminine aspect onto a woman or some other aspect of yourself onto some other kind of person.

So "Why do I think that the FWBO attracts a greater number of men than women at the present time?" Well, sometimes I say you'd better ask the women that but I suppose there is an answer. I'm glad the questioner says "at the present time" because it does vary, it does fluctuate. In some centres there are more women going along than men or have been at least. So it isn't an absolute, an absolutely true statement or wouldn't be an absolutely true statement if one was to say that a greater number of women than men always do go along.

But it does seem that a greater number of men than women, as it were, stay the course. They stick. They stay around. They become mitras, they get kalyana mitras, they become Order Members. A higher proportion of men commit themselves than apparently do women. I think one can say that. I'm not going to say more about that question at the moment because it crops up a little later on in the other questions.

So "What conditions must be created before mixed communities and co-ops become equally attractive alternatives to single sex enterprises?" Well, why are single sex enterprises attractive, to some people at least, why? Why does one go into a single sex community or into a single sex right livelihood team situation? Well, in terms of these questions it is because one wants to go into a situation where there is less likelihood of one projecting one's unconscious or only partially conscious or partially realised femininity or feminine aspect, onto a person of the opposite sex so that you can experience yourself more fully, more completely, more truly as an individual who includes or comprises within himself both positive and negative, masculine and feminine aspects in a united and integrated way. I mean, this is the utility of the single sex communities and co-operative situations as everybody knows.

Now if and when, or as and when the mixed communities and mixed co-ops can offer you that sort of help in your spiritual development, obviously, for obvious reasons they wouldn't by definition offer

you the same kind of help, but if as and when they can offer you the kind of help, the kind of incentive in your spiritual life, in becoming more and more of an individual of this kind, well then they will become an equally attractive alternative. But certainly not before.

So "Do you think that the above conditions are ever likely to be created? If so at what stage in the FWBO's development do you think this will be?" I must say that I cannot imagine a mixed community, even of people who are relatively individuals who would be able to offer the same kind of help, or comparable help perhaps I should say, as do certainly at present the single sex communities. I'm not prepared to say that there never will be mixed communities which can offer comparable advantages at some other stage of our development but at present I certainly can't imagine what form they would take or what those advantages would be.

All right B. "What do you think would be the most significant problems or obstacles which we'll be confronted with as a movement and as individuals in the future?" Well, as regards individuals probably the same old obstacles. Greed, hatred, delusion, the five hindrances. Yes, I'm afraid I can't promise you any new obstacles. (Laughter)

But as a movement, well, we might be faced by global catastrophes, but that is something for which the past has not prepared us at all. It's a much too big issue to go into at the moment but apart from that I don't think there is any new problem or new obstacle that is likely to arise. That is to say, any that has not arisen before, at least so far as the individual is concerned. Whether there may be new 'organisational', inverted commas, problems, I'm not sure. There may be, especially if we become very, very big there may be problems of communication and so on. But I think we need not anticipate. If they arise we'll deal with them as they arise, and if we see them coming we'll try to nip them in the bud.

Anyway time is passing so let's go onto another group. This relates mainly to women and their place in the evolutionary scale. There are questions from three people. First batch of questions, it says,

*"The other evening you gave a possible ladder of ascending development, animal, woman, man, angel, bodhisattva, Buddha."*

I believe I also included artist, didn't I?

*"I have a pair of relevant questions. Does this mean that man is more developed than woman and if so in which ways? Two. How does the gap between woman and man compare to that between man and angel in quality and extent?"*

Then. (Pause) Oh, there's one, there's the other question, or one of the other questions is practically the same.

*"Please amplify on the position of the woman in the hierarchy of animal, man - animal, woman, man, artist, angel etc which you mentioned? In what senses is she inferior to the man in particular? And thirdly, what do you see as the main difference between men and women in the spiritual life?"*

These are questions which are often coming up and I think some of the implications of these questions from a Buddhist point of view run rather counter to a number of contemporary

assumptions. So I think in this particular area, especially if one is relatively new to the FWBO one must be prepared for something of a shock because there's a sort of modern conditioning as well as a traditional conditioning and that modern conditioning of one, well maybe adds a little bit, but having said that and coming to the question let me say a few general words about woman, or women. Most of you have had very limited experience of women. I think I may say that my own experience has been very, very much more extensive. (Laughter) Don't misunderstand me. (Laughter) Most of you are well acquainted, well fairly well acquainted, well a little bit acquainted, say with English women, even with Scots women. (Laughter) Welsh women. Some of you are acquainted with Finnish women, with Swedish women, with New Zealand women, they're all pretty different.

But, my own acquaintance is pretty much with Indian women, with Thai women, Tibetan women, let me think, Burmese women, Japanese women, many of whom

**[End of side one side two]**

I knew or had contact with in the course of, my work in India. So one of the mistakes that we often think or we often make, is to identify woman or women in general with that particular type of woman that we're acquainted with in the West. And I think this is a great mistake because woman in the West, like man in the West, is a rather peculiar development. I remember my own horror, shock and astonishment (Laughter) when after twenty years in the East I had my first really good look at a couple of women in the West. I'd encountered Western women in India but they were sort of, well, curiosities.

But I remember when I arrived from India, when I came back in 1964, the plane touched down in Paris and I took a little stroll around the airport and I happened to see two French stewardesses and I sort of gazed at them in fascinated horror because they were quite unlike any Indian women. Quite unlike any women I'd seen for a long, long, long time. Because first of all they were very, very stiff. They were very, very rigid. They were poised on very high heeled shoes. Their expressions were hard, disdainful, haughty, cold, severe, arrogant. It was really quite extraordinary. Indian women's faces do not have that sort of expression, hardly ever. They're usually warm, soft, kindly, gentle, though they can be very determined and very strong. They're not weak characters, but these French stewardesses that I saw were really almost inhuman and then I saw a man come up to them and just ask a question, ask some direction. They turned their backs on him in the most haughty manner imaginable and in the rudest manner imaginable and this really impressed me.

These were the first two women that I really saw when I arrived in the West and that experience made a strong impression on me. Now, they weren't completely characteristic but they were somewhat characteristic. So when one is asking questions about women what does one have in mind? About whom, or what is one asking? So one must think of women as they are in a relatively unspoiled state, certainly not spoiled by modern, western, urbanised, industrialised etc so-called civilisation. So when I'm asked about women I think, for instance, of all the women I knew in India, all the ex-untouchable women, even caste Hindu women, Tibetan women, Chinese women I've meant, Sinhalese women as well as Europeans and Americans. So I see things from a somewhat different point of view and I think I see them in a somewhat wider context. So let's look at the question, the first one.

"The other evening you gave a possible ladder of ascending development: animal, woman, man, angel, bodhisattva. So does this mean that man is more developed than woman and if so in which

ways?" There is of course the lower evolution and there is the higher evolution. So in what does evolution consist? From one point of view at least evolution, especially the higher evolution, consists in the development of consciousness and not only the development of consciousness but in the emancipation of consciousness from its biological base.

Now the superiority of man to woman, and here of course I'm generalising, the superiority of man to woman consists in his greater degree of emancipation from his biological base. In the case of women the biological base is more important and occupies a much larger place in their consciousness, so to speak, and in their life and this is due to their role in the process of reproduction. It is after all woman who conceives and woman who bears children, who suckles them, who nurtures them, and woman is therefore built to speak, as it were, teleologically to a great extent for that purpose in a way that man is not built for fatherhood. Woman's consciousness, woman's energy is much more bound up with her biological role than is that of man, therefore she is less emancipated and finds greater difficulty in emancipating herself from that biological role and it is that basically in which the inferiority and superiority, to use those terms, essentially consists.

Now I'm not denying that there are exceptions. There are certainly women who manage to emancipate themselves from their biological role or from the predominance of their biological role and do definitely spiritually evolve as individuals. There's no doubt about that but when one asks about women or about men one is asking about the mass and therefore when one answers one is speaking about the mass, even while admitting that exceptions certainly do exist. The Buddha made it clear that women can evolve spiritually so in Buddhism we have no doubt about that but it is more difficult for women than it is for men generally speaking, for most women that is say, on account of the facts that I've mentioned.

Now in the course of my work with people obviously women come to me as well as men and women come and discuss their problems and difficulties as well as men and for a woman who has started thinking seriously in terms of leading a spiritual life and trying to develop spiritually assuming say that she is not married and has no children, it's a real problem whether she should have children or not. You may not be fairly flattered to learn that the man is not a very big problem for her. It is the child that is the problem, the baby, the having the baby that is the real problem and many women who become quite seriously interested in the spiritual life and who feel themselves that having children, having babies, is incompatible with the spiritual life, at least for the time being, really have to ask themselves, do I want to develop spiritually or do I want to have a baby? In a way that a man never has to ask himself. A man, no man has ever come to me and said, "Bhante, I've got a problem - whether to follow the spiritual life or whether to have a baby". (Laughter) Whether to be a father, no man has ever come to me with that problem but many a woman has come with that problem so it is much more of a question for them.

So if they give up having a baby, their own baby, producing it from themselves, it's a much bigger sacrifice than is the corresponding sacrifice in the case of the man. So this is why I put women lower in the evolutionary scale than I put men, on the whole. I mean, bearing in mind that one is speaking of the type, so to speak, and not necessarily always of the individual.

So "How does the gap between woman and man compare to that between man and angel in quality and extent?" Well if one takes ordinary undeveloped man and ordinary undeveloped woman the gap between them is very, very much less than that between man and angel. After all, woman sees man. Man does not see angel. You know, man has a physical body like woman. Angel doesn't have a

physical body, so I would say that between ordinary undeveloped man there is a much bigger gap - between ordinary undeveloped man and the angel - there is a bigger gap than there is between the ordinary undeveloped man and the ordinary undeveloped woman. The developed man, the very developed man is, of course, the angel himself in human form. So in that case there is no gap.

All right, "What do you see as the main difference between men and women in spiritual life?" Presumably the questioner means, all right, if a woman enters upon spiritual life, overcoming her greater difficulties and if a man enters a spiritual life, well, what's the difference between them? What sort, is there a difference of approach and attitude? I'm not altogether sure about this because the more a woman transcends, successfully transcends her one-sided, I won't say femininity, it's more like femaleness, and a man successfully transcends his one-sided maleness, the more androgynous each becomes, the more their spiritual path tends to be the same. It is very often thought that women are more devotional than men. I think perhaps on the whole they usually are, though I wouldn't like to be too sure of this because some men can be very devotionally inclined, I mean, more devotionally inclined than say intellectually inclined.

I also think that when women take up the spiritual life, perhaps the competitive element is less important. Well, women seem less competitive than men so there's some women I know within the Movement who've recently questioned this and have claimed to be equally competitive. (Laughter) But I think that women are less competitive so that within their spiritual life there is not the sublimated competitiveness that there is in the spiritual life of men and therefore maybe - though again I don't want to be too certain about this or too dogmatic - perhaps less spiritual drive.

On the other hand women are less easily distracted. Women can settle down to a retreat and get into meditation and things like that I've noticed without distraction. Their retreats tend to be much more together than those of men I've noticed in some cases. But in any case as I've said the more deeply both men and women get into spiritual life the less difference there is in their spiritual life. But in view of the remarks I've made previously it does seem that fewer women on the whole do really get into spiritual life than men but once they do get in, well they're in the same way, more or less, than men are and have the same sort of meditation experiences, the same sort of transcendental insight and so on. The higher you go on the spiritual path and the more androgynous you become, well the less difference there is between men and women, male and female, masculine and feminine and so on.

So I think one must honestly recognise differences lower down in the evolutionary scale between man and woman but one must also recognise that the higher both go in the evolutionary scale the more they become individuals, the more the differences between them of every kind except the purely physiological ones do tend to disappear. (Pause)

"In Peace is a Fire", this is a question about communication.

*"In 'Peace is a Fire' you are quoted as saying that you can only speak the truth to one person. The greater the number of people you are speaking to the more what you say becomes an approximation to the truth. What exactly do you mean by this?"*

Well, in a way I wish I knew. (Laughter) I think I knew when I said that or wrote that (Laughter) but it's rather elusive, it's rather elusive. One can only speak the truth to one person. The greater the number of people you are speaking to, the more what you say becomes an approximation to the truth.

But what is the truth? Is it something sort of abstract and general. I mean, this is the thrust of the whole saying. That it is not something abstract and general. It isn't something really that exists apart from communication. Truth in a sense is something that takes place between individuals. When you're speaking to a number of people you are in a way speaking to the lowest common denominator rather than to the highest common factor. All those who've spoken to large audiences know this. If you speak, if you address a mass meeting it's a quite different experience in speaking to a few friends. The fewer the people you speak to the more you're speaking to individuals because you're speaking just to them. You're not speaking, so to speak, to what they all have in common. If you address a meeting of the, well let's say the Labour Party, well you're speaking to them inasmuch as they have in common the fact that they're members of the Labour Party. In other words, they're individual differences are sunk in the fact that they're all members of the Labour Party. You address them therefore as a group. A Labour Party group, a branch of the Labour Party. You cannot speak to them as individuals. Therefore in speaking to them you cannot yourself be an individual to a very great degree.

So if you are not yourself an individual, how can you speak the truth? If you do not speak the truth how can you communicate the truth? The truth has to be spoken, can only be spoken by an individual to an individual. The truth is a matter of experience, and experience is the experience, so to speak, of the individual and can be understood only by the individual. When you're speaking to a large number of people, unless you're speaking to a spiritual community you inevitably have to water things down as it were and speak to the lowest common denominator. So this is something of what I meant by this particular aphorism. (Pause)

All right. Problems of practical life. These tend to be the most difficult of all. The first one is a bit of a hardy annual not to say perennial. The question of violence and how to meet it. This might have arisen out of some remarks of Padmavajra's in the course of his talk about the Trailokya Bauddha Mahasanga.

*"We live in a society where violence is increasingly apparent on the streets and where we all stand a good chance of having to face it at one point or other. If one is attacked oneself or if one sees a friend or someone one loves or a weaker person attacked the immediate response which can also need courage is to go and help, to meet violence with violence. But if one accepts that this is all right then what when social, religious, racial or political groups are attacked? It would be very easy in this instance to justify teaching the ex-untouchables in India how to defend themselves, not just as individuals but as a community and one is on very dangerous ground. Is there a middle way here? A positive response to violence that lies between turning the other cheek and meeting violence with violence?"*

I think there is a middle way, just to deal with that part of the question directly. I think there is a middle way but it's a rather long term solution of the middle way and that is to build yourselves up and make yourselves as a community, as a group, sufficiently strong so that others will think twice about attacking you. For instance in India there's a quite large community, almost a separate religion called the Sikhs. People always think twice about attacking a Sikh. Why? Because it's well known that if a Sikh is attacked all the other Sikhs in the vicinity will at once go to his rescue and will attack whoever attacked him. That's well known. So people tend to keep their hands off the Sikhs. I think as far as the ex-untouchable Buddhists in India are concerned they'll have to build up that sort of reputation. It's not going to be easy and certainly as Buddhists one can't recommend violence.

Looking to the sort of general question, or the general situation one can only say that one must imbibe as much as possible the principle of non-violence. One can't as it were think about non-violence on the spot or about violence on the spot. You will respond spontaneously. One cannot say that one should respond with violence but if you've imbued the principle of non-violence only to a limited extent then with violence you will respond. If one does respond with violence, even with justifiable violence I think one has to recognise in retrospect that was not very skilful but perhaps was the most skilful or least unskilful thing that one could do in the circumstances and that one should devote oneself to bettering the overall situation so that that kind of less unskilful action can be replaced by something more skilful. It's a very difficult and complex situation.

At present I don't think the ex-untouchables have got anything to gain by retaliating and returning violence with violence, simply because they're a minority. They're usually scattered. I mean, there's a few hundred of them where there may be a few thousand caste Hindus, or a few dozen of them where there may be hundreds of caste Hindus. They've been distributed around in this sort of way but where in some of the big cities they've got large groups they do not tend to be attacked, but only when they're in the minority. So perhaps one of the solutions is, though it's a difficult one, that the ex-untouchables should group themselves together in large communities, in large groups in the cities away from the rural areas where they're most threatened. In the big cities where there are lots of ex-untouchables living together I think it's unlikely that they would be attacked. But one can't guarantee that.

But I don't see any easy solution to this any more than I see an easy solution to the problem of violence in the world generally. It is quite a problem. What is a non-violent person to do in a violent world? What is a dove to do in the jungle? Well, even the Bible says a word or two here. Be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. I think you can only afford to practise non-violence if you're a very clever, not to say crafty person. Yes? I think the innocently non-violent person is probably going to suffer. You've got to be quite crafty to avoid situations of violence, to evade them, especially so long as you are the weaker party. So this isn't really in a way very inspiring or very encouraging but I think we have to be quite, as it were, realistic. But I do think that, you know, as the Buddhist movement in England, in India grows and expands and the Buddhist, the ex-untouchable Buddhists become stronger in every way, including economically, and gain more and more influential positions in society, perhaps themselves even become policemen and magistrates and so on well then they'll be less likelihood of injustice, including violence, perpetrated on the ex-untouchables.

Right, that's the first of those practical questions. Second one is on computers and the spiritual life. (Laughter) I must say I don't know anything about computers at all. I once saw Vajrabodhi playing with one. When I went to visit him at his technical university in Helsinki he said, just come along and let me introduce you to my computers. He had a sort of master computer in his private study which controlled many, many other computers in a big, oh I don't know what you call it, it wasn't a laboratory, if it's chemistry you call it a laboratory but if it's physics I don't know what you call it. Anyway it was enormous. I think bigger than the shrine room and it was filled with all sorts of, well, things. (Laughter) And so he took me round and introducing me to his computers and playing with them a bit and he said, "You know, I a bit dull, a bit tired or fed up, you know, in the lunchtime, I just come in a play with my computers." He says, "it's really fascinating what they do". So anyway this question is about computers and the spiritual life.

*"Computer technology could be of great use within the Friends in that it could free people from time-consuming and largely boring work. However it would be very difficult for the*

*operation to be economically viable. Where do our priorities lie?"*

Hmm [Laughter] "Could free people from time-consuming and largely boring work." I'm a bit doubtful about all that. For instance, well when you're free from this time-consuming and boring work what do you do? All right supposing your work is, well what shall we say, a bricklayer. You get plenty of exercise. So all right you get a computer to do your bricklaying for you. I presume it can be done by computer or computer control. So, all right, since you're not bricklaying anymore you need exercise. So what do you do? Instead of carrying bricks you go into weight-lifting. [Laughter] So in that sort of way, well, what's the gain? There's not much point it seems to me in getting something done by mechanical means which takes away, in a sense an essential part of your life which you then have to replace, as it were, artificially. I've given a crude example but you see the sort of thing I getting at.

Should we be so interested in labour-saving devices? Do labour-saving devices necessarily conduce to human happiness, welfare and individual development? There are some works perhaps that a human being ought not to do which may or may not be necessary to be done from a human point of view. Well if they are, let them by all means be done by machinery, by computer. The other day, well where were we? Yes, we were in Hastings and we just dropped into a supermarket to pick up one or two items and right in front of me there was a woman with a big basket, a big wire basket as she'd done her shopping for the weekend. She'd bought all her food for the weekend. There was a packet, well there was a packet, you might have seen these things. I was fascinated. I hadn't really seen one before. A packet, I think it was fishfingers. Well, that was clearly Friday lunch. And then there was another packet, rice and curry. And then was another packet of something else. She just had to heat them up apparently and that was probably the extent of the cooking that she did to do.

Now she had saved labour, she'd saved time but I couldn't help thinking was it really worth it? Would it not have been better for that woman to have cooked properly for her family? Well, what does she do with her spare time? She probably watches telly or she dusts the sofa for the umpteenth time, in the best room. You see, so the question is, well, when you saved all this time, well, what the hell do you do with it? (Laughter) You've then got to occupy yourself, you got a problem of leisure. You feel bored. So I think one has to look very carefully at this question of labour-saving devices. In India the women go to the well with pots, brass pots, copper pots, and they fetch the water. It gives them exercise. They've a wonderful carriage. A wonderful deportment. It gives them an opportunity to meet their friends. So is it really an improvement that each one sits in her own little house or cottage and just turns on a tap and doesn't get any exercise? Is that really an improvement? I know this sounds a bit reactionary. I mean, don't please take me too literally but you can see what I'm getting at.

So to save labour is not so important as we sometimes think it is. I mean, because then what do you do with your spare time? And surely some of the things which are being done for you by machines, are things which it is good for a human being to do for himself, with his own hands, his own feet, his own body or her own body. What about for instance picking grapes? Well, what a delightful occupation? Wouldn't it be much better to pick your own grapes than have them harvested by some machine that goes swooping along? I don't know the economics of all this but I suspect that some revisions and maybe drastic one would be necessary.

In any case maybe it's a good thing that the operation is not really economically viable anyway. But, yes, it would be a question of priorities. Supposing, yes you had a certain amount of cash spare and

there was a particularly nasty job that no human being ought to do and if it is decided objectively that the work, that particular work, needs to be done, all right you can then decide, put your money into a computer which will do that work through machinery for you so that human beings won't have to do it. But I really think you must be careful of putting your money into machines or computers or technology of any kind which takes away from the individual human being that work which in a sense is his birthright. (Pause)

Oh! We are getting on. Totally different question.

*"Is Stream-Entry a goal that Order Members are likely to realise in their lives if they make a continuous effort?"*

By Order Members doesn't just mean people who are nominally members of the Order but obviously deeply committed people who are really getting on with their meditation practice and everything that supports that and the spiritual life in general. I'd be very disappointed if Stream-Entry wasn't a real possibility for the vast majority of Order Members. If it wasn't then one would rather wonder why they were Order Members at all. In the course of our study group we did go into this topic of commitment, Going for Refuge, as being a Going for Refuge to the Unconditioned. And the Unconditioned is lit up, is illuminated, is revealed by insight. And when you develop, as it were, a substantial measure of insight, that is to say, insight capable of breaking the first three fetters, then you enter the Stream and I've given an explanation of entering the Stream in simple terms in the recent talk on 'The Taste of Freedom'. And to overcome those three fetters by determined effort I think is not beyond the reach of any truly committed person.

*"What steps need to be taken for an Order Member to achieve Stream-Entry?"*

Well, I think that's obvious. The Eight-fold path. Sila, samadhi, prajna. That might sound rather cut and dried but it really is as simple as that. You don't really need anything else like that. You don't need really anything more. It's so simple it's almost unbelievable. But no need to make it complicated if it isn't. There's an old Indian saying that if you want to grasp your nose, you just grasp it, you don't do this. (Laughter) People are always wanting to do this. How should I give up such and such and such. Well, how? Just give it up! (Laughter) That's all there is to it. So, straight and direct and simple.

All right. A question relating to the direct and simple. This is, I think I'll reveal the name of this questioner because he isn't here. He was here, the letter's signed Kamalasila. I'll read his questions and then I'll read a bit of the letter which gives a bit of background to the question. I'll dig out the questions first.

*"Can alienated apes usefully meditate and are they ready for Vajraloka?"*

I'll read a bit of that (Laughter). Rather more than a bit. All right, he says, I don't think he'll mind me reading this because it does light up the questions. "I think this", I think it's this, "very definite attitude towards Vajraloka is probably shared by quite a few Order Members, let alone Mitras and I can't help feeling there are quite a few Micchaditthis which affect Vajraloka around at the moment. He said" - someone that Kamalasila's been talking to, that "very recently he had been concentrating very much on developing his gross energies, becoming more identified with the ape within. Fair enough! He said he was only just beginning to make some progress in that and so felt that meditation

was a long way off from where he was at. (Laughter) If he were to go to Vajraloka he would only increase his alienation. He was not ready for a situation which he saw as one of intensive meditation. I told him that he didn't appear to me to be that alienated and that you had said that any mitra," it was a mitra speaking to Kamalasila, "could benefit from a week there. A lot", three underlinings, "a lot of people seem to think that meditation easily causes alienation and blocked emotion. I would have thought that it tends to expose one's basic emotion together with any refusal to acknowledge or express or else it exposes one's lack of feeling. But that's not all it does. It seems to have other effects too. People overvalue the psychological, so even though I'm unfortunately not able to be there to hear your reply I would like to contribute a question for the question-answer session. 'Can alienated apes usefully meditate and are they ready for Vajraloka?'

Well, there's lots of trees around Vajraloka from them to swing on. (Laughter) "A lot of people seem to think that meditation easily causes alienation and blocked emotion." I think this is the crux of the whole matter, not so much the actual questions asked. So let me deal with that. "A lot of people seem to think that meditation easily causes alienation and blocked emotion". Meditation in what sense? Did anyone ever hear of Mettā Bhāvanā causing alienation or blocked emotion? I mean, I haven't yet. But it is true that if you are in an alienated state and practice the Mindfulness of Breathing this may not be very helpful. This may, if you're very alienated, increase your alienation. But it's not a question of advising such a person, whether ape man or not, not to meditate. Do the Mettā Bhāvanā. Because if you are out of touch with your emotions, well the best thing you can do is to get straight back into contact with your emotions and what better way of getting back into contact with your emotions than by practising the Mettā Bhāvanā. I do know, I am aware of the fact that Mettā Bhāvanā, if people aren't very careful, tend to be neglected as compared with the Mindfulness of Breathing. People seem to find on the whole mindfulness of breathing easier, at least they seem to, the last time we generally discussed this topic.

I have said originally, especially in the days that I was taking classes myself here in London that even though one starts with the Mindfulness of Breathing that being as it were more accessible and psychological and more of a technique, one should aim as soon as one can at balancing the two practices, and doing as much Mettā Bhāvanā as Mindfulness of Breathing. I find or I have found that people tend to neglect the Mettā Bhāvanā. Even some Order Members I have known at least from time to time seem to give it up completely as though it's, as it were, too difficult. But one must persevere. So if one is alienated, whether an alienated ape or otherwise, one should develop Mettā Bhāvanā. Take up that particular practice.

So I would say that even if you are trying to get into touch with - what does one call them? - grosser energies, this is quite valid but you don't have to be at the same time completely out of touch with your more refined energies. If someone say was working on a building site in London or in a building team for a while, and then wanted to go off to Vajraloka, I see no reason why he shouldn't do so and why going to Vajraloka for a spell should interfere with his getting in touch with his gross energies. Sometimes in the course of meditation itself you encounter your grosser energies in a way that perhaps you didn't when you were on the - what do they call it? - I'm forgetting all these terms, I don't often have to use them, on the building site. (Laughter) Building site. I think that's what it's called. (Laughter) I tend to mix these things up with cremation grounds! (Laughter) There's no reason why you shouldn't usefully go off and have a retreat, because if you have contacted your grosser energies the meditation retreat will help you refine them a bit and if you haven't contacted your grosser energies, well, the meditation retreat will help you do just that. I don't think one should be too precious about these grosser energies. That would seem to be a bit self-contradictory. "I'm

afraid of getting out of contact with my grosser energies." (Laughter) It's almost as bad as being afraid of getting out of contact with your more refined energies. So alternate a bit. Sometimes be a bit gross, sometimes be a bit refined. Sometimes be on the building site, sometimes be away at Vajraloka and if you are in any degree alienated, well, just get on with the *Mettā Bhāvanā*. I think if you really do the *Mettā Bhāvanā* properly, I think you could almost dispense with the Mindfulness of Breathing. You're certainly not unmindful when you're doing *Mettā Bhāvanā* but you may, at least have a tendency to, well not exactly alienation from one's feelings but a tendency to be not very feelingful, even though doing the mindfulness of breathing apparently quite successfully. So I say give great importance, central importance to the *Mettā Bhāvanā*. I think that more or less answers both those two questions.

Something now a bit more personal. A bit more personal. Two questions. One questions says,

*"Could you say something about Jamyang Khyentse and also your contact with him?"*

And the other says,

*"Please tell us something of your friend C.M.Chen, the Zen hermit and his way of life?"*

Well, I have to cast my mind back a bit. Something about Jamyang Khyentse? Jamyang Khyentse was one of my own Tibetan teachers in Kalimpong from whom I received several Vajrayana initiations. So let me say just something about him and then something about my contact with him. He was one of the most famous Tibetan teachers in modern times. Possibly even the most famous. Everybody knew of him. And he belonged mainly to the Nyingmapa tradition though he had studied and even practised the teachings of all the different Tibetan traditions, especially Vajrayana traditions, and had a sort of encyclopedic knowledge. He was always studying. He was also always meditating. He was a great student and scholar and a great meditator and yogi both together. And he'd was of course an incarnate lama as they're called, a tulku. And he was one of a group of five. His predecessor in the tulku line was very, very famous and had five, as it were, reincarnations, one for body, one for speech, one for mind, one for guna, and one for karma. I can't remember which Jamyang Khyentse was. I think he was the body incarnation but I wouldn't be sure of that one. I'd have to look up my notes. He had to leave Tibet of course when the Chinese invaded and eventually came to India. Many incarnate lamas were his pupils and he identified many incarnate lamas and by the time he came to India he was about fifty-five and not in very good health. And he was in great demand as a teacher and for initiations and so on and was a very kindly and affable kind of personality, very impressive.

I met him in Kalimpong in, it must have been 1957 when I met him and I was in contact with him only for two years because he died in 1959. And in Kalimpong when I first met him he happened to stay in a bungalow in which I had lived myself for six months some years early, shortly after my arrival. And I remember I had a Sikhimese friend who was a staunch follower of the Nyingmapa tradition and he was very keen that I should meet Jamyang Khyentse. And so the meeting was arranged and I went along to meet Jamyang Khyentse. My first impressions were twofold. I had two very strong impressions when I met him. First of all he didn't seem like a Tibetan at all. He seemed much more like a Burmese. The Tibetans and the Burmese are allied, ethnically. So externally he didn't seem like a Tibetan lama. There was nothing sort of colourful and glamorous. He looked like an elderly Burmese monk. But at the same time when I first met him I was, as it were, attracted to him in a way which I had been to very, very few people, very, very few lamas, maybe just two or

three. And I at once felt something quite strange and something quite peculiar which can't really be put into words at all. And we had a conversation and it was rather symptomatic of his wide range of interests.

I can't be absolutely certain that this was the very first conversation that I had with him but it might have been. He looked up from his book and he said, after we'd exchanged the customary sort of, courtesies. He said, "Do you know anything about dancing?" (Laughter) I said, "No I don't I'm afraid". So he said "Hm", he said, "I've just been reading about dancing. I just wondered if you knew anything about it". So it transpired he was going through the Tanjur, the collection of treatises written by ancient Buddhist scholars and he was at that time studying fourteen different texts on Indian dance which had been translated into Tibetan hundreds and hundreds of years ago. Texts of what we nowadays call perhaps, Bharatnatyam, Indian classical dance. He was interested in the subject because of the lama dances. He was investigating to what extent the lama dances followed the ancient Indian classical dance tradition and he wanted to find out if I knew anything about this or had any experience of classical dance in India. But I hadn't so I couldn't help him. But that just showed the breadth of his interests.

And, anyway, subsequently I got to know his chief disciple. His chief disciple was himself an eminent incarnate lama and was the head monk, the abbot, of the leading Nyingmapa monastery in Sikkim which was also the royal monastery responsible for all royal ceremonies, the Pemiyangtse Gompa. So this chief disciple who was a man of about forty-five and a very, very devoted disciple of Jamyang Khyentse, became quite a close friend of mine and eventually a teacher. For some reason or other he took from the very beginning a very warm interest in me in a way that few Tibetan lamas did and seemed really very concerned about me in every way and wanted to have contact with me. He was very, very friendly and very, very warm and used to come down to Kalimpong and stay with me. But much of his time was spent with Jamyang Khyentse getting as much instruction as possible from him.

Subsequently he passed on to me a lot of things that he'd learnt from Jamyang Khyentse after Jamyang Khyentse's death. But anyway one day he said to me, "Why don't you ask Jamyang Khyentse for initiation?" He meant Tantric initiation which is called Wong or Wongkur.

**[End of tape one    tape two]**

So I sort of demurred that he's a very important lama and he's very, very busy giving initiations to all sorts of people. He might not want to give to me. Though at the same time I felt very attracted by him. So Khachu Rimpoche as his name was said, "No. You must ask. If you want", he said, "I will ask for you". So I said, "All right. Please do". I mean I could feel his sort of warmth and sincerity and he really wanted that I should, sort of, enter the Nyingmapa tradition under Jamyang Khyentse's auspices and really benefit from it. He was really keen in that sort of way. Not in a sort of forcing or pushing way but I could sense, but out of sheer goodness of his heart and warmth and concern for me that I should benefit as much as possible from the Nyingmapa tradition and from Jamyang Khyentse's presence. So I said, "All right, if you don't mind, please ask on my behalf." So he said, "All right. I'll do it next time I'm in Darjeeling". Jamyang Khyentse was then in Darjeeling undergoing medical treatment and giving some few initiations and teachings. He was already quite a sick man though you couldn't tell it by looking at him. He had quite a number of different quite serious complaints, liver, stomach, all sorts of things.

So after, I think it was a few weeks, I got a message from Khachu Rimpoche from Darjeeling, "Come at once. I've asked Jamyang Khyentse to give you initiation and he has agreed". So when I received that message I was quite ill. I was actually ill in bed. I had a very painful swelling of the whole jaw. It was almost like lock-jaw. I could hardly move my jaws and the swelling was extended over the whole of the side of the face and down on the neck, it was very painful. I couldn't eat, I hadn't been able to eat for some days and I felt very, very ill indeed and I was in bed and had been in bed for four or five days. So I got this message, "Come at once". So I said to myself, well, his says come at once and, you know, Jamyang Khyentse presumably is ready to give me the initiation and then I couldn't help thinking, having read the life of Milarepa and all that. Well, maybe it's a test, you see. (Laughter) Well it would have been quite easy for me to just say, well sorry I can't come, I'm not well, but I thought, "No", I'll go. So I got straight up and I went straight off that morning to Darjeeling. And I stayed with some friends with whom I usually stayed and I was quite ill and I felt quite ill. But anyway I went along to Khachu Rimpoche. He took me to Jamyang Khyentse and it was arranged that the following day I should receive the initiation. And, Ah yes I remember now, Khachu Rimpoche said, "You're really lucky", he said, "I only asked for one initiation but he's going to give you four. (Laughter) Yes". He says, "You're really lucky. He doesn't often do that, as it were, spontaneously. He doesn't usually give initiations for which he hasn't actually been asked". He said, "He's going to give you the initiation for Manjugosha, for Tara, for Avalokitesvara and Vajrapani and he's going to give them", I don't know quite how to phrase it, but it's sort of in the spirit of the Ati-yoga. I mean these initiations can be given in many different ways so he was going to give them in the spirit of the Ati-yoga which is the highest yoga of the Nyingmapas.

So all right I went along the next day and as the Tibetan custom is a number of other people were receiving the initiation but it was being given to me at my request so I had the sort of the chief place. I was sitting right in front and the Maharani of Sikkhim, the mother of the present Maharaja, or the present ex-Maharaja was also present, she being a very staunch devotee of Jamyang Khyentse. I knew her quite well already. And Jamyang Khyentse's dakini was also present - I'll say something about her in a few minutes - and about maybe ten or twelve other people, I think mainly monks, young monks. So they all sort of sat around behind me and everything was done in Tibetan, Khachu Rimpoche explained quite a bit to me afterwards. But I didn't really know in a sense what was happening, in a sense, but I was still wretchedly ill and my face and everything was very, very painful. But anyway I thought I just had to make the best of it.

So I don't want to describe it, but anyway the ceremony went on for two or three hours, with Jamyang Khyentse chanting and going through various meditations himself, and the thing I remember most about the whole experience was that at various points Jamyang Khyentse would invoke different Bodhisattvas, that is to say the Bodhisattvas especially whose initiations he was giving, and he sort of, every now and then, he looked up, and the expression on his face was such, it was clear he could see the Bodhisattvas. You could see the Bodhisattvas sort of reflected in his face. I mean you couldn't see them, but he could, but you could see them in a sense reflected in his face. There they were. He sort of gave a smile of recognition, "Ah, Avalokitesvara!" (Laughter) Because he's a really nice old man, you see, with no show or pomp or anything put on. Very natural and straightforward though at the same time quite dignified and impressive but not in an overpowering way and with a shaven head of practically white hair. Just a sort of white stubble. So in that way the initiation proceeded and he gave me a copy of the text or rather he got one of his disciples to make a really beautiful copy which I still have, and another disciple made a beautiful wooden cover for it which I still have, and later on he instructed another disciple to make a thangka for me depicting the deities, the Bodhisattvas whose initiations he'd given me together with teachers of the lineages, and

he told Khachu Rimpoche that he had in fact transmitted to me the sort of spiritual essence of the entire Tibetan tradition, all the four schools to the extent that it had come down to him and he was believed to be a master or initiate of all those different traditions, and one of the main figures in a movement called the Non-Sectarian movement, the movement for the unification of all the different Tibetan traditions.

Soygal Rimpoche for instance is a disciple of his and belongs to this particular tradition. Soygal of course was with him as a little boy and I knew Soygal as a little boy and he used to stay with me. Now of course he has a centre down in London. Anyway that was the initiation. That thangka, by the way, I brought to Bombay when Kalimpong was perhaps going to be invaded by the Chinese. I kept it with a friend and it's still there. The friend took rather a liking to it and didn't really like to part with it when it had been with him, though it was only left with him for safe-keeping for so many years, so since he's a good old friend I didn't like to insist so I've left it there. But Lokamitra has photographed it at my request so that we can make copies and people maybe can have copies. So so much about that.

Jamyang Khyentse unfortunately for his disciples died as I said in 1959. But I have had several other experiences with him. I'm only going to relate one now. I once went to visit him in Gangtok and, yes, I think I had to wait a little while before I could go in and see him. So, I forget how the topic arose but in the course of conversation I asked him, I think, or he just told me, what he'd been doing, you know, just before I entered. So, no, I think he told me spontaneously that he'd been performing the funeral ceremony of a monk who was a disciple of his who had died and he'd been especially chanting the Vajrasattva mantra and he told me that the chanting of the Vajrasattva mantra was especially appropriate in the case of the dead. That if one wanted to benefit a dead person, especially, one should chant the Vajrasattva mantra for them or on their behalf. So I remembered this as you'll see.

When I was in Kalimpong in 1967, on my sort of farewell visit, I was there with a friend who had accompanied me from India, I had a quite a strange experience. I was staying at the Vihara and it was nighttime. It was the night of the new moon and I was sleeping in my room. I was on my bed, this side of the room, and my friend was sleeping on the floor, this side. So there was a sort of empty space of floor in between. So I suddenly woke up in the middle of the night and it was about two o'clock in the night. I subsequently looked at my watch. But I woke up and I was wide awake and I sat up in bed and I looked down and I saw in the floor a deep pit. It must have been about ten or twelve feet deep, a deep pit. And in that pit someone whom I had known was standing. I won't give any further details about him. That would be a very long chapter indeed. But anyway he was a friend of mine, an Englishman who'd died a few years earlier, about three years earlier in rather strange circumstances. He was standing in that pit with his hands together pleading or sort of begging, though he wasn't actually saying anything, to be helped or to be saved. And he was in a very, very sad condition. So I was wide awake and I saw this figure with exactly the same clarity, literalness, just as I can see any of you. There's no difference at all. That person was actually there standing down there in that pit. Yes.

So I knew that he needed help. So then I had a sudden recollection of what Jamyang Khyentse had told me about repeating the Vajrasattva mantra. So I started repeating, and again I'm still wide awake, repeating the Vajrasattva mantra and then I saw the letters, the Tibetan letters of the mantra came out of my mouth, yes, they just as though they were just carved out of some physical substance and quite bright and shiny, they came out of my mouth and they went down, like in a mala, in a chain, down into this pit. So here was I reciting the mantra (Laughter) like this going on and this

friend of mine in the pit, he took hold of this loop of mantra, and he climbed up out of the pit and when he climbed out of the pit, everything vanished and it was pitch black in the room and I heard outside a horn blowing and I knew then that it was the Jogi because it was the night of new moon.

Now who are the Jogis? [Laughter] Jogi is the way the Nepalese pronounce yogi. The jogis are a very strange set of people. I was a little bit acquainted with them. They're hereditary - jogis. They have also been. They're a separate caste but nowadays they have in Nepal all sorts of different occupations. But periodically the king of Nepal calls upon them or some of them to go out over the whole Himalayan region. They have a duty to perform. They have to collect the spirits of the dead. So they put off their ordinary clothing and they dress as jogis and, that is to say, they have just a white loin cloth, and a few other things, I forget which they carry with them, and a ram's horn as a horn. And they perform certain ceremonies, chantings, on the night of the new moon and they collect the spirits of the dead that are wandering about. Any that are unable to rest for instance. They just collect and they've got strange ceremonies, strange things that they do with them. They go from house to house and they stand outside the house at night blowing their horn and chanting and collecting the spirits of the dead. And people are very afraid of them and dogs won't touch them, fierce dogs it was well known, will just slink away whining and whimpering. They need have no fear of dogs. And the next morning they come, turn by turn to each house where they've performed their ceremony the night before and these yogis had often come to the vihara and my students and servants would be very afraid of them and not want to go near them but the custom was they had to be given rice with a few coins. They might be quite rich people and not need the money but they were doing that tour of duty and that was the custom. You had to give them rice and money. So I used sometimes to call these jogis in. My servants and students used to say, "Oh you can't do that, it's the jogis, very dangerous and ..." And they were really weird people. There was something very strange about them. But anyway I used to call them in and talk to them sometimes. So anyway I heard the jogi blowing his horn, just as everything went black and I knew what it meant that that was the night when they collected the spirits of the dead.

But the most extraordinary feature of the whole experience was that when I just saw that person with the same vividness and three-dimensionality as I see all of you now. But after that I had, you know, considerable faith in the Vajrasattva mantra and in what Jamyang Khyentse Kensi had said and in the usefulness of the Vajrasattva mantra in a case of those who had died.

So perhaps I need not say more than that except a promised word or two about the dakini. The dakini was a very strange young woman indeed. She was quite beautiful in a Tibetan sort of way. Very, very still, very, very quiet and Khachu Rimpoche assured me in case there should be any misunderstanding that there was certainly no sexual connection of any kind between her and Khyentse Rimpoche but she did have a certain part to play in certain Tantric ceremonies which he performed. And she was clearly very, very devoted to him and after he died she was very upset and went into retreat for quite a long time. She was then about twenty-five and yes, Khachu Rimpoche also told me that Jamyang Khyentse had been requested by all his disciples to take this dakini, whatever that might have meant - it certainly didn't mean anything sexual - because that would thereby prolong his life otherwise he would have died some years earlier. That is what they believed very strongly.

She certainly was quite an unusual woman, almost uncanny but in a quite positive sort of way. Very quiet. Hardly ever said anything and never presumed on her position. Was quite sort of dignified and quite respected by people and, you know, devoted herself to meditation, to quite an extent.

Anyway, that's Jamyang Khyentse. I really have been rather going on haven't I? (Laughter)

All right, a few words about Mr. Chen. Mr. Chen was a very different character. He was a fat little Cantonese, er no, not Cantonese, I forget which part of China he, oh, Ho Nang he came from. A fat little Ho Nangnese or Hunangese and he lived on the outskirts of the bazaar in two rooms and he stayed there, must have been there about fifteen years, something like that. Maybe twelve years. But he didn't move outside those rooms. Not until a few years ago he went to America and (Laughter) for some time, I think for several years, I used to go and see him every Saturday and he had a wonderful knowledge of Chinese Buddhism and the Mahayana sutras and the Vajrayana. He'd spent time in Tibet and he'd taken initiations from Jamyang Khyentse in Tibet as well as from other Tibetan lamas. And he was quite flamboyant. In some ways he was a typical Chinese, or at least sometimes they're like that. And he usually wore Western dress, or sometimes Chinese dress, sometimes Western dress, sometimes Hawaiian shirts, skull-cap, and he spent most of the day in meditation and you couldn't go and see him during the day, he didn't see anybody before seven, I think it was seven o'clock in the evening usually, sometimes he'd let me go and see him at five o'clock. For a long time I went to see him every Saturday evening and spent the evening with him.

And I learned a lot from him about Chinese Buddhist texts, Chinese Buddhist traditions, about Taoism even, Taoist yoga, the Vajrayana, meditation. Also he was a mine of information and had practised many, many different teachings and traditions. But it was very difficult to understand him - he spoke an extraordinary English. His command of English was good but the pronunciation was awful and only if you knew him very well could you understand his English. To some people some English speaking people it sounded just as though he was speaking Chinese. And he was very, very visionary. He was always having visions and almost every time I went to see him he had a whole plethora of visions to relate to me and I mean, deities of various kinds that had come to see him and offerings that he had made them and conversations he had with him. It was almost like William Blake on a much grander scale and he was quite extraordinary. He was very excitable, despite all the medi ... well, maybe because of the meditating (Laughter) bubbling over with energy, bubbling over with energy and talking very sort of vigorously and with great enthusiasm about everything. Real sort of drive.

But you had to be able to sort of take him, if you see what I mean. Some people found it just very upsetting. He was just too much for them. And he took, he was a, in a sense, though he had a very, very good mind and could explain some points of Buddhist doctrine better than anybody else I'd ever met, he also took Buddhism very literally and was a sort of Buddhist fundamentalist. He took every word of the Mahayana sutras quite literally. So that took a bit of taking sometimes. (Laughter) But as I said I learnt a very great deal from him and we had a quite close relationship, I mean, for several years until I left Kalimpong and came to the West.

He's in America. In a way I'm a bit sorry that he went to America. I don't think he's doing all that well there. I don't think he's really sufficiently appreciated. His manner is very bizarre and he can easily be misunderstood or misinterpreted. But we have a little contact with him. Dipankara tried to contact him. He found out his address, went along but he wasn't in so he left some FWBO literature, and a note that he'd come the following day. He went the following day but as he arrived Mr Chen was about to leave by plane for some other part of the US to give a talk somewhere. So they had a very brief talk and that was that and Dipankara said he seemed a bit preoccupied as might have been natural with his journey so they weren't able really to say very much. But at least he was glad to have met him and just to convey my good wishes. But he was really quite a phenomenon.

I enjoyed his company immensely but some of my friends found him very disconcerting, especially as he could be very blunt and very outspoken. Sometimes his language was quite crude and down-to-earth. He didn't mind. He was also quite a poet in Chinese but he unfortunately he was also convinced he was a poet in English (Laughter) which he wasn't. (Laughter) Another characteristic was he'd never be anybody's guru. He would never give initiation. He would talk to you and tell you about his experiences and explain anything you like but he would never be, as it were officially, anybody's guru but he was certainly a very, very good kalyana mitra. If you wanted initiation or wanted a guru he'd direct you to the nearest Rimpoche.

At the same time he was very, very critical of Rimpoches. He thought they'd really degenerated over the centuries and he was very scathing about married Rimpoche and married Nyingmapa lamas. He'd say, "What do you think of Rimpoche so-and-so?" He'd say "The way he practises the Vajrayana. The way he's practices the sexo-yogic practises?" he'd say. "What do you think?" He said, "He practised them with his own wife. Isn't it disgusting?" [Laughter] Whereas according to strict tradition he ought to have culled various maidens from the village and (Laughter), that would have been the orthodox way to do it, not with his own wife, in fact, you know. It was nothing to do with marriage, these sexo-yogic practices as he called them. This was his term in English, not an expression I like but he (Laughter) always called them sexo-yogic practices.

So once when he was a bit confidential I said, "Well, you know, Mr Chen, have you ever practised these sexo-yogic practices?" So he said, "Well, to be quite frank I did try in Tibet, but," he said, "unfortunately I was a bit too excitable" (Laughter) So he said, "I know all about them" he said, "I've got all the teachings from learned lamas but I haven't really been able to practice them." (Laughter) So I thought that quite frank and honest. So he sort of approved them in theory but regarded them as sublime practices which the degenerate modern age including himself was really capable of. So for practical purposes he could not (?).

But his understanding of the Mahayana, Mahayana philosophy, the Avatamsaka teachings, Sunyata, Yogachara, it was very masterly and it was quite a joy to hear him talk about these things. He had a clear understanding and he'd read the entire Chinese Tipitaka, all one thousand six hundred and sixty-five, I think it is, works through twice. He had an excellent memory and could produce a quotation or a reference just like that.

So he also was a remarkable combination of, I won't say the scholar but a very, very well read and knowledgeable Buddhist and the yogi, like Jamyang Khyentse. So I considered myself quite fortunate that I should be in such close contact with two people who combined these two characteristics. They were yogis. They were very deeply versed in meditation with a great deal of experience of meditation and at the same time they were very widely read men. They knew their Buddhist literature. They were quite cultured men. So I appreciated this very much.

But anyway we've gone over time. Just the last question. Desert Island Discs. I'm sure you know what the question's going to be.

*"If you were marooned on a desert island what five pieces of music would you take and which five books, you can assume that you already have the complete works of Shakespeare and the Bible. (Laughter) If one other item could be salvaged from the sinking ship what would you save?"*

Oh dear! Well, those five pieces of music. I don't think I'd think in terms of pieces of music. I'd think I'd think of the five composers. I'd think I'd like something by Mozart, of course, something by Haydn, something by Bach, something by Handel and something by, perhaps, Purcell, perhaps Monteverdi, something like that. Sorry to be so classical but I think that would be ... And which five books. "You can already assume you have the complete works of Shakespeare and the Bible". Well, I think if I could be a little, not exactly difficult, but a little individual, I think I'd like to change those books into big fat notebooks with blank pages. I don't think I'd particularly want to read anything. If I was on a desert island but I think I'd be much more concerned to write something. And if I had the Bible already I could write a refutation of it! (Laughter) And as for Buddhism. No, I wouldn't, I don't think I'd want any Buddhist book. I think if I don't know sufficient things by this time, to just meditate upon on a desert island I've wasted my time. I don't need to read any more books on Buddhism. I know quite enough about Buddhist literature already. I mean it's either part of me or it isn't after all these years. So I wouldn't take any Buddhist literature. But I'd ponder on what I'd read and reflect upon on it and very likely write upon it. If I was permitted to take those five notebooks.

"So if any one other item could be salvaged from the sinking ship what would it be?" Well, a big box of bios. (Laughter) So that I could write in my notebooks. If I wasn't permitted to take notebooks I think what I would do would be to ask for five books, whatever they might be or select five books, with very, very wide margins. (Laughter) And write in very, very small letters and in that way I hope I'd pass my time very happily until I was rescued, well, meditating, reflecting, going for walks along the beach, gathering grapefruit and cocoa nuts (Laughter), chasing away the monkeys, listening to my records, reading my Shakespeare, just for poetic relaxation and stimulation, reading my Bible to get my wrathful energy flowing (Laughter) and writing my compositions on Buddhism and a few poems and a thoroughly demolishing commentary on the Bible. I can't think of a better way to dispense a few years. I expect I'll just have to arrange to be shipped back as quickly as possible.

But anyway these are the questions and these I hope are the answers and I hope that you at least some illumination in at least some of them. I'm afraid, if you don't mind, we'll have to abbreviate the meditation a little. I think people should be in the mood for some *Mettā Bhāvanā* now. I think we might try just going straight into the fifth stage, if you know what I mean and making it a little longer than usual. Just starting off with the people that we are actually in contact with on this event, at least some of them and just spreading out in ever widening circles to all the different centres and communities in all parts of the world. I think we ought to be able to plunge straight into it in that way, certainly towards the end of this event. So perhaps we could have the bell in, shall we say at quarter to ten and have that short *Mettā Bhāvanā* but intensive *Mettā Bhāvanā* I hope and then the concluding Seven Fold Puja.

**(Applause)**