

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS - MEN'S ORDER CONVENTION 1985 -

Nagabodhi: It's my very pleasant duty to introduce Bhante for a question and answer session. Bhante's very fond of introducing people who know, who need no introduction and I don't think Bhante needs any but perhaps it's worth introducing the question and answer session which just a few words. These words 'question and answer' session tend to roll off the tongue. They're there in the programme, a 'question and answer' session. Three 'question and answer' sessions during the convention. But if you think about it it's really quite remarkable because Bhante invites questions and we all know he doesn't invite just any old question, he's inviting questions that we have failed to answer for ourselves whether they're about spiritual life, about the more practical dimension of the movement, about Buddhist tradition, about Buddhist metaphysics. They're questions that we've already thought about, tried to answer for ourselves, perhaps discussed with our friends in our chapters, and we've been stumped.

And so we present these questions to Bhante knowing, in full confidence that he will answer them. I mean it really is quite a remarkable opportunity that we're being given by Bhante to have our questions answered and not glossed over or not just, perhaps pushed into one area or another but to be actually answered and that really is quite a considerable expectation that we come with. If it was anybody else I would say it would be very difficult for Bhante to take the rostrum under those circumstances but I know Bhante feels no, no lack of confidence at all because he's more than capable of

answering our questions. As things stand I know we have enough questions for tonight but I believe we still have space for more questions on the next two sessions. So please think very hard, rack your minds and your memories for those questions because it is a wonderful opportunity that Bhante is giving us to have our questions answered. So that's it. I'll now hand you over to Bhante to answer our questions. (Pause)

Sangharakshita: Tonight we have rather a mixed bag of questions. In fact the bag is so mixed that I haven't been able to sort out the questions into different categories as I did for the question and answer sessions on the mixed convention. So we're going to take the questions more or less as they come. I don't think I'm going to be able to get through all of them this evening. In fact I'm pretty certain I won't be able to because several have come in more or less at the last minute. So I think we have more than enough questions for tonight's session and some will necessarily be carried over to a future occasion.

The questions also are of several different kinds in the sense that some, I mean, are questions of the sort that Nagabodhi has referred to, that is to say, questions that Order Members haven't been able to answer for themselves. A few I suspect don't quite fall into that category. They may be questions which it is difficult, so to speak, to find out the answer to rather than actually impossible. We start off with an apparently quite simple question. At least it's very short. The question is:

"Briefly, what is vedanta?"

Well that's a question about which a lot could be said. One could look it up I suppose in an encyclopaedia. One could look it up in a general book about Indian religion and philosophy. One could look it up in the Hastings Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. One might even be able to

look it up within Encyclopaedia Britannica. I haven't checked but vedanta is indeed a vast subject and a lot has been written about it. Perhaps the questioner was afraid of becoming lost in the woods. In fact there is quite a famous book called "Rambles in the woods of vedanta". (Laughter) I believe it was in seven volumes! So I shall try to keep my reply brief and to the point. So "What is vedanta?"

The word vedanta is made up of two parts. It's veda and anta. Anta means 'end' literally but it doesn't mean quite end here, it means something like 'essence' and 'veda' of course means veda. But what does one mean by veda. Here what is referred to, one might say, is the fourfold veda or four vedas. That is to say, the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda of the Brahminical Hindu tradition. Each of the vedas is subdivided. It's subdivided into what is called a mantra part. The mantra part consists of hymns as we usually call them to different vedic divinities. There are hymns to the Sun. There are hymns to the Wind or winds. There are hymns to the sacred soma plant or juice. There are hymns to the god Indra. There are hymns to the dawn. The hymns to the dawn, (Ushas?), are among the most beautiful in the whole collection. There are hymns to Rudra and in the case of the Atharvaveda especially there are hymns to all sorts of minor divinities and sometimes philosophical divinities. The Atharvaveda being rather a mixed bag of earlier and later material.

So first of all in each of the vedas there comes this mantra section. Then one has a section of brahmanas. Not to be confused with the brahmanas who are Brahmins in the sense of priests. The brahmanas are rather curious documents. They deal mainly with rituals of various kinds; rituals for various purposes; mundane purposes and they deal with the way in which the mantras, the hymns to the gods, are to be used for ritualistic purposes. I'm speaking very, very broadly.

There are a few exceptions to what I've said. And then one has got thirdly and in a way most importantly, an aranyika(?) section. Aranyika(?) literally means 'forest book'. And the most important sections of the Aranyikas(?) are what we call the Upanishads. I think that everybody has heard of the Upanishads. There's quite a number of Upanishads. Some are really and genuinely part of Vedic literature, others are only very nominally so, having been composed many, many centuries later. There are said to be traditionally one hundred and eight Upanishads and there are about eighty to a hundred in actual circulation and eight or ten of these are usually referred to as the chief Upanishads. They're the oldest of the Upanishads. And they were formerly held to be earlier than the Buddha and His teachings but opinion is beginning to veer it seems and it may well be that they are either contemporaneous with the Buddha or a little later. It's now seen that some of them at least show traces of the influence of Buddhism which was not formerly recognised. So one has got this vast Vedic literature. It is really vast considering of the mantra part of Vedas, the brahmana part, the Aranyika including the Upanishadic part.

So Vedanta, the term Vedanta in its primary significance refers to the teaching of the Upanishads. The Upanishads come at the end of the Vedic literature and are also held to constitute its essence or quintessence. This is not to say that the teaching of the Upanishads is at all uniform. The Upanishads can take many different trends or strains of thought. They're certainly not a unified teaching. In the Upanishads different teachings are attributed to different ancient sages.

The term Upanishad itself is often explained as meaning 'to sit near', that is to say to 'sit near' a teacher for the purposes of receiving instruction. So the Upanishads are generally considered to contain, so to speak, the higher teachings of the Vedic tradition. And it is significant that in many cases the teachers are not Brahmins but Kshatriyas. And to some extent they're all incorporated in the Vedic literature. To some extent, at least some teachings of the Upanishads represent a sort of revolt or reaction against the Brahmins and against their ritualism, against their sacerdotalism and so on. Now in the course of the development of Indian thought the Upanishads, especially the major

Upanishads, the principal Upanishads, form a very important part but not in their raw state, as it were, but as commented on by a succession of Hindu teachers, Hindu philosophers who are usually called acharyas. So in this way you get a number of schools of Indian philosophy developing, growing out of the commentaries of these various acharyas on the Upanishads. And in its secondary sense, and perhaps more secular or popular sense, Vedanta means 'the philosophy of philosophies' of those acharyas, especially in modern times, the first of them.

The first of them of course was Shankara, sometimes called Shankaracharya who commented on the Upanishads and also a work called the Vedanta sutras, sometimes called the Brahma sutras which professes to be a sort of systematisation of the teaching of the Upanishads as well as on a third work, the Bhagavad Gita. So Shankara commented on these three - well he commented on all the major Upanishads, on the Brahma sutras, (sutra here has a different meaning from what it has in Buddhism), and on the Bhagavad Gita. And he commented in such a way as to try to prove or to try to demonstrate that the Upanishads and the Brahma sutra and the Bhagavad Gita taught what came to be called Advaita(?) vedanta. That is to say non-dualist vedanta. According to Shankara non-dualism, advaita, was the standpoint of the Upanishads and the related texts.

We don't really know when he lived. Probably the ninth century, eighth or ninth century AD. He's a very obscure figure. There is a sort of biography of him called the Shankara Dig Vijaya but it's very sort of largely non-historical in character.

Then somewhat later than Shankara, several centuries later, two or three centuries later, came another teacher called Ramanuja. Shankara by the way belonged to South India, to Kerala, Ramanuja also belonged to South India, to the area around about Madras. Ramanuja though did not believe that the Upanishads and the related texts taught non-dualism. He believed that they taught what has come to be called 'modified non-dualism' or Vishishtadvaita. Advaita maintains that there is only one ultimate reality and all duality is pure illusion. That's Shankara's teaching. Ramanuja did not believe that. He believed that there was one ultimate reality but he did not believe that what we perceive is an illusion. He believed that it had a sort of relative reality and was a sort of manifestation of the ultimate reality or Brahman. So his standpoint, his philosophy is called Vishishtadvaita.

And then of course there was a third teacher called Madva and he taught what is called Dvaitadvaita that is to say dualist vedanta. He believed that there was an absolute gulf as of creator and created between Brahma or Brahman and the world. Some scholars believe he was influenced by Christianity which perhaps at that time had started to be introduced into South India. These are the three principle schools of vedanta philosophy. There are others, there is Ninbarka's school. There is Valupa's school and there is Chaitanya's school but these are perhaps of lesser importance.

So when one speaks of vedanta in the secondary sense one means the teaching of these great acharyas based upon ultimately the Upanishads, though of course there were considerable differences between their respective teachings. But usually nowadays, especially in modern Indian circles, if they just speak of the vedanta they really mean, though incorrectly, the advaitavidanta of Shankaracharya. In addition to commenting upon the Prasanna triad as they're called, the three authoritative texts, that is to say, the Upanishads, the Brahma sutras and the Upanishads, Shankara composed a number of independent works rather in the style of Nagarjuna's Madhyamikakarikas. He composed a work called, the most famous one is the Vivekachudamani, the Crest Jewel of Discrimination. And there was another one called Rig Drishaviveka, Discrimination between the Subject and the Object. There's a whole lot of these, as it were, minor works but they're very brilliantly written and they've all been translated into English. They're very well known in modern India in philosophical circles.

So this very broadly speaking is what is called vedanta. The vedanta popularised by such bodies say as the Rama Krishna Mission in India and the Shivananda Ashram and all sorts of other bodies represents a sort of popularised, even vulgarised, version of the Advaita vedanta of Shankara. A very diluted version of the Advaitavidanta of Shankara. So this is very briefly what vedanta is.

"What do you think of their model of the universe as the breathing of Brahma?"

This is not strictly speaking a Vedantic doctrine except perhaps to some extent with regards to Ramanuja. This is a doctrine or teaching found in some of the Puranas. That is to say they believe, and this is sort of part of general popular Hinduism, that the universe evolves and involves. Evolves and involves over vast periods of time. In the beginning there is only Brahman or Brahma in the case of those who are more theistically inclined and he is, as it were, asleep but then he wakes up or if you like he breathes out, and as he breathes out the whole cosmos is emanated and then as he breathes in after millions and billions of years he draws back the whole cosmos into himself. So there is this process of breathing in and breathing out, evolution and involution and this goes on without beginning and without end. But the point of course here is that for at least this popular version that the universe emerges from Brahma. It's a sort of transformation of Brahman. It's a vivatar as it is called. The Upanishads do contain traces of this idea. One of them says that just as the spider spins its thread out of its own substance and makes its web out of its own substance, in the same way Brahma spins this whole universe out of his own substance and then withdraws it. According to Shankara this is only an apparent manifestation. The apparent manifestation being due to primordial ignorance. But according to Ramanuja it is a real manifestation and a real production, a real creation even.

So this is the popular view at least. There is some difference here with the Buddhistic view. When I was speaking about evolution and involution it might have all sounded quite familiar to you but the Buddhist view is rather different. In the Hindu view of whatsoever school, it is Brahman himself or itself, is the ultimate reality that evolves, if you see what I mean. It is from the ultimate reality that the cosmos emerges but this is not the Buddhist teaching. The Buddhist teaching is that the process of involution and evolution takes places entirely within the phenomenal order, the samsaric order. Yes there is, so to speak, a brahma if you like or a brahman, but that is the most refined form of the mundane and manifestation consists, evolution consists, in that refined form becoming more and more gross until it reaches the point of ultimate density and then the process is reversed. It becomes more and more subtle, more and more subtle, yes.

But it is neither from ultimate reality that the process starts nor to ultimate reality that the process goes back. Ultimate reality transcends, nirvana transcends, Buddhahood transcends, both the evolution and the involution. It is not out of Buddhahood as it were, it is not out of nirvana that the samsara emerges and to that that it returns. Both positions are, of course, beset with philosophical and logical difficulties. We're not going into that now. But I just want to point out the difference between the brahminical view and the Buddhistic view. All right, so that's the second question.

The third of these questions is:

"What did it, i.e. the vedanta, absorb from Buddhism?"

In the case of vedanta as Upanishads it's not easy to answer this question because it's only just begun to dawn on people it seems, scholars, that perhaps the Upanishads, the principal Upanishads are not prior to the Buddha. But it does seem that there are just little traces of Buddhistic influence here and there. But in the case of the later schools especially in the case of the Advaitavedanta of Shankara the influence of Buddhism, is quite marked, especially the influence of the Mahayana and of

Madhyamika. Shankara, of course, lived after the rise of the Mahayana and several centuries after Nagarjuna. In fact we do know that the teacher of the teacher of Shankara was a philosopher, a thinker called Gaudapada. And, he was the teacher of Govindapada who was the teacher of Shankara. Gaudapada was the author of a famous work called the Mandukyakarikas. The Mandukyakarikas are a series of verses by way of commentary on one of the Upanishads and the mark of Buddhism there is quite plain to see. In fact he evokes the Buddha and there's a great discussion really, dispute among Indologists and scholars in Indian philosophy as to whether he was really a Buddhist or not or to what degree he was. Many Hindus will maintain Gaudapada was not a Buddhist at all and not influenced by Buddhism but most agree now that he was influenced by Buddhism and some maintain that he was actually a fully fledged Buddhist but who was making use of Upanishadic terminology and teachings to put across his Buddhistic message. But nonetheless it is true that there is at least some connection between Gaudapada and Buddhism and he was the teacher's teacher of Shankara.

Now in Shankara Advaitavedanta it is usually held that there are certain definite doctrines which are due to Buddhism which are not found in the Upanishads. For instance, the teaching of what is called Anadisamsara as Sankhara calls it. That is to say, that samsara has no perceivable beginning. That seems to come to Shankara from Buddhism. And then his Mayavada, his doctrine of illusion, cosmic illusion, seems to come from Buddhism. His teaching about the double truth. That is to say relative truth and absolute truth. That seems to come from Buddhism. These, as far as I recollect just off hand, I haven't looked at these texts for many, many years but these are the main influences on Shankara from Buddhism. In fact in one of the Puranas - in the Padmapurana - Shankara is actually called Pratyanaubauda. Pratyanaubauda meaning a 'krypto-Buddhist' or a 'concealed or secret Buddhist'. The Padmapurana belonging to the dualistic tradition which is opposed to the Advaitavedanta of Shankara.

So that is very roughly what Vedanta, Advaitavedanta absorbed from Buddhism. So "Why doesn't it work?" Presumably vedanta. "Where does it fall down?" Well one could ask this question about Advaitavedanta, Vishishtadvaita, Advaitavada, Shuddadvaita, and so on and so forth. But that will be rather a long evening's work. (Laughter)

"Why doesn't it work?" What does one mean by working? "Where does it fall down?" Well, in what sense, from what point of view? But I think that one can say this. One of the things that one notices from a practical point of view about the Advaitavedanta, or about those who profess the Advaitavedanta, is that it makes no difference apparently to their actual behaviour. For instance, most ordinary Hindu followers of Advaitavedanta will observe the caste system in all its strictness in their daily lives. In other words they will maintain that all is one, and that Brahman is the only reality, 'Brahman Satyan Jagup Mithya' they say - Brahma is the only reality, this world is an illusion but though this world is an illusion they will continue to observe the caste system, continue to observe untouchability in their ordinary lives. So what does this suggest? What is the lack? What is it that is not working?

Well, from a Buddhist point of view what is lacking is compassion. And it would seem that the great deficiency in the case of the Vedanta, where it falls down is in this absence of compassion and a Buddhist will say it was because the ultimate reality that the Vedanta professes to realise is not in fact the ultimate reality because if the ultimate reality is beyond all duality, well it must transcend the duality between touchable and untouchable. It must release compassion. The Buddhist teaching is that along with prajna goes karuna, compassion. But it seems that along with the vedantic 'jnana' - they use that term, not prajna - along with the Vedantic jnana there goes no compassion. Therefore one cannot but doubt the genuineness of the jnana and doubt whether it is really the same thing as the Buddhistic prajna.

So this I think, in very simple terms, is where the Vedanta falls down. It is compatible with an acquiescence in the Brahminical status quo in the crudest sense. Of course, a Vedantin will argue the toss. If you raise these sort of questions, he will say, 'Well who says there are untouchable? Who will say that I am practising untouchability? That is just your dualistic vision.' But perhaps we need not go into that this evening. But very broadly speaking, yes, I think that this is the great weakness of the Advaitavedanta as I saw myself in India on many occasions.

So five:

"Vedanta claims to be non-dualist". Of course this should be Advaitavedanta claims to be non-dualist. "How do you view these claims especially in relation to the unconditioned?"

Well, it seems to me that the absolute, to use that term, the Brahma, of the Advaitavedanta is only an ontological principle whereas in the case of Buddhism ontology is rejected. Sunyata is not to be understood as an ontological principle. One might say, one might go so far as to say that sunyata represents the negation of all ontology. So the unconditioned of Buddhism which equates with the sunyata of Buddhism is not to be regarded as an ontological principle. And inasmuch as Brahman is an ontological principle it isn't to be equated with the unconditioned. So that's the brief answer to that. There's a further more practical question.

"What is the difference between Buddhist visualisation and mantra recitation say of Padmasambhava and Hindu visualisation and mantra recitation say of Shiva? Some modern Hindus speak of their gods in a very similar way to the way in which the buddhas and bodhisattvas are spoken of in the Friends."

That's quite true and in form, in appearance, iconographically speaking sometimes there is very little difference between a Buddhist bodhisattva and a Hindu god, I mean, that's pretty obvious. But what about the meaning? An Advaitavedantist will tell you that the Hindu god or goddess is a manifestation ultimately of Brahman. But that is to say, it's a concrete form of an ontological principle. But a Buddhist will say, certainly a Mahayana Buddhist will say, that the bodhisattvas are not manifestations of a any ontological principle but of sunyata which is the negation of all ontology. This may seem to be rather a technical point but actually it's a very, very important point. A very, very important difference indeed. Perhaps one will need to ponder upon that quite a bit, especially on the point that the sunyata is not an ontological principle. Some of you might in all innocence have thought it was so far but I can assure you that isn't. The very language that we use, in a way, obliges us to speak of sunyata as though it is or was an ontological principle but again it isn't. It's something quite different but even in saying it is some thing quite different one is misrepresenting the situation, misrepresenting the position, because it isn't a thing at all. Although of course it isn't really the absence of a thing or both or neither. So perhaps we'd better leave it there. (Pause)

Something completely different and in a way not so easy to answer. (Laughter)

"It seems that from the earliest days of Buddhism chastity has been considered of great importance."

That is a completely non-controversial statement. So following upon that preliminary statement, that preliminary clearing of the ground.

"One, I'm unsure of why it has been viewed as so important, especially what is the important difference in value between chastity and a life free from relationships or where sexual desires are satisfied through masturbation, and/or occasional sexual encounters?" And then two: "It seems that many of the people in the Friends who have tried to be chaste, even in ideal conditions, have found it

very difficult. Some have even found it a complicating factor or a hindrance to their lives. Do you have any comments on this?"

Well, obviously there's quite a lot could be said but first of all perhaps start from something quite general and quite straightforward and agreed upon as in fact the questioner said at the beginning, i.e. that "from the earliest days of Buddhism chastity, brahmacharya, has been considered of great importance" and that is very true. Now, having agreed with that, so to speak, I want to introduce a quite important point before going on to try to, if not answer, at least say something about these questions.

I think one should try not to think so much in terms of a difference as of black and white, between chastity and non-chastity. It's almost as though sometimes people think either one is chaste or one is not chaste. So in a sense that is true. Yes, one is either chaste or unchaste. But one could also say that everybody is chaste to some extent. And also that everybody is unchaste to some extent. It isn't quite so black and white, it isn't quite so absolute as sometimes we think it is. Now what do I mean by that. Well, in the first place, chastity, brahmacharya, is usually considered to exist on three different levels. There's body, speech and mind. And usually we think of chastity only in physical terms. We think in terms of bodily chastity, but that isn't really enough. There's obviously bodily chastity but then there's also, let's say, verbal chastity. I mean, you may be observing celibacy physically but supposing you're quite fond of dirty stories and enjoy them quite a lot and maybe always telling them or listening to them, well your chastity is hardly complete.

And suppose even though you're abstaining from sex physically and don't enjoy the dirty stories, well, your mind may be full of sexual images. It may even be obsessed with these sexual images. Technically you're observing celibacy but you're not observing it in the full sense, perhaps not even observing it in the highest sense. So you have to take these three different levels into consideration. So you may be chaste on one level but not on another and you have to take all of them into account.

So perhaps one could say that in Buddhism the aim or the object is to progress in respect of chastity and to become progressively more and more chaste on all these different levels. Maybe you won't be successful in working on them all equally, but you should be working on all three of them to some extent all the time and moving therefore more and more in a direction of eventual complete chastity on all three levels, even though you're unable actually to reach that level to any great extent until you are well on in middle age. But I mean that should be your objective. So it's not that what such and such people are chaste and such and such people are not chaste. It isn't nearly as simple as that. One should think in terms of everybody making a conscious deliberate effort to work towards greater chastity, a more perfect observance of brahmacharya, on the physical level, the verbal level and the mental level until you end up virtually chaste on all three of those levels.

All right, having made that point let's get down to the questions.

"I'm unsure of why it is being viewed as so important especially what is the important difference of, in value, between chastity and a life free from relationships but where sexual desires are satisfied through masturbation and/or occasional sexual encounters?" So first of all, Why has chastity, brahmacharya been viewed as so important in Buddhism from the beginning? The early Buddhist texts don't tell us very clearly but we can gather several things. I think that first of all there is, what we might call, the socio-economic aspect. That is to say, that in the Buddha's day and for many, many centuries afterwards, if you engaged in sexual relations with the opposite sex, sooner or later you would become a father, not once perhaps, but many times. And obviously it would be very difficult for you to get on with the practice of meditation and leading a spiritual life generally if you had all the responsibilities that an Indian father would have in those days, especially if he had a large family. There's also the point that in those days the bhikshus, the people leading full-time or

predominantly spiritual lives, were supported by the public: the religious minded public. Now the religious minded public might be quite willing and happy to support you as an individual practising the Dharma, trying to gain liberation, but supposing they had to support not only you, but your whole family as well, even assuming that you could get on with your spiritual life as well as have a family. That would have been a very great burden on society. Perhaps they could support, let's say, a hundred or a thousand bhikshus but supposing they all had wives and families, well that would have represented a tremendous burden on society.

So it's as though society said to the bhikshus, "Well, we'll support you provided you lead celibate lives and don't place an additional burden on the social and economic structure." So I think that was one consideration apart from the fact that a family would have been a hindrance to the leading of a spiritual life.

And then of course there's the psychological. That sex is, as everybody knows, not only a very powerful instinct but is bound up with all sorts of emotions very often of a very negative character, and if one is trying to meditate especially, if one is trying to get into higher spiritual states, if one is trying to be a brahmachari in the purely spiritual sense, the sense of one coursing in, or moving in the higher spiritual states, the brahma viharas, the brahma lokas, then one cannot afford to allow too much scope, too much play, as it were, to sex and emotions which are usually associated with it.

So I think chastity or brahmacharya was considered of importance in the earliest days of Buddhism mainly for these reasons. One, because if you weren't chaste you ended up with a family and that would have been a great burden on society if you were not working to support it and were leading a spiritual life instead, and also that the emotions associated with sex and family life and so on were mainly of a negative kind and therefore to be avoided by one leading or trying to lead a spiritual life.

All right. That's the first part of the first question but what about "A life free from relationships but where sexual desires are satisfied by masturbation and/or occasional sexual encounters?" Well, this brings us back to the point I made a little earlier on, that is to say, that no one is completely celibate or chaste and no one is completely unchaste. So if one's position is that one does not have a sexual relationship and one's sexual desires are satisfied by masturbation and/or occasional sexual encounters, it means, well, you're chaste to a greater extent than people usually are in society. Sex occupies a smaller place in your life than it does in most people's lives and you should try to keep it that way and even to reduce it to the extent that you can do that without undue emotional or psychological strain. In this way you will move in the direction of much greater chastity, greater and greater brahmacharya.

So two: "It seems that many of the people in the Friends who have tried to be chaste, even in ideal conditions have found it very difficult." Well, again, go back to the point I made. Perhaps they've tried to go too quickly. Perhaps instead of just trying to move step by step in the direction of eventual chastity on all three levels they've tried to sort of cut off their sexuality on the physical level all at once. Thinking of chastity entirely in those terms, instead of perhaps trying to cut it down little by little. I know cutting down very little by little, is very difficult for some people. Sometimes people have to give up completely. Otherwise it's like giving up smoking little by little or giving up meat little by little. You end up not giving up at all. So, maybe in the case of some people they have to give up sex like that and be chaste like that. Give it up altogether. But I rather suspect that in the majority of cases, especially in the case of young people, it's a question of sort of, bringing it under control and limiting it and bringing it more and more within bounds and gradually eliminating and perhaps even refining it rather than cutting it all at once.

But certainly one should be moving in that direction, assuming your starting point to have been that

of a healthy young male with an average sort of sex life. Once you come into contact with the dharma your aim should be to keep that within, so to speak, narrower and narrower limits and put your energies more and more into other things. So "it seems that many of the people in the Friends who have tried to be chaste, even in ideal conditions have found it very difficult." I suppose by 'ideal conditions' the questioner means conditions such as those of a country retreat centre where one is not meeting members of the opposite sex and so on. "Some have even found it a complicating factor." I think it would be a complicating factor only when one goes about it in a wrong way and tries to cut off sexuality completely and be as far as one can completely chaste right from the beginning instead of gradually eliminating or gradually bringing under control and then indeed the chastity may give you more trouble even than unchastity did before, in a way.

So "Do you have any comments on this?" In a way I've made my comments but a further point I'd like to make is twofold. First of all in the modern world chastity is not easy, no one encourages it. You might say that the Catholic Church encourages it but the same Catholic Church encourages family life which is it seems more enthusiastic about life family sometimes than about chastity. So that doesn't really help. So I think society, the society in which we live is constantly inciting us, so to speak, one might say to use this language, to unchastity. So many of the advertisements that we see, not only on the Underground but in newspapers and magazines and there's even pornographic literature, all this is inciting us to unchastity and chastity as an ideal is nowadays regarded as just ridiculous. No one really believes in it any more. I believe even a lot of Catholic priests don't believe in it as an ideal but only as a sort of professional requirement, and a requirement of canon law, not a requirement of the gospel, and that's quite a different thing. And so it maybe that some of you, some of those who try to observe chastity but find it difficult, in a way don't really believe in it. Perhaps you sort of think it's a good thing, but it doesn't sort of really inspire you, doesn't really move you. You know, the ideal of brahmacharya very often is not presented ...

(End of side one Side two)

.... so chastity or celibacy is usually understood as abstention from the supreme mundane enjoyment. So therefore is identified with a rather joyless life, rather dull, dry, sort of life and it is well-known that when people do become, even people involved in the spiritual life, a bit tired, a bit fed up, a bit bored, a bit dull, a bit dispirited very often, they just turn to sex, just to liven things up. In a way it's natural. But, yes, we don't get much help from society and we're not usually presented with a very inspiring ideal of brahmacharya or chastity. Even the word chastity doesn't have a very positive sound altogether and celibacy doesn't and one can't help remembering Dr. Johnson's famous dictum that marriage has many pains but celibacy has no pleasures. [Laughter] Well, Dr. Johnson in his day talked a lot of sense but that wasn't one of those occasions because (Laughter) if you think of celibacy as brahmacharya, 'coursing in brahma', coursing in higher states of consciousness, coursing in more blissful, more ecstatic, more illumined states of consciousness, how can one speak of that as having no pleasures.

But another factor is that nowadays, as we know only too well, friendship has been rather devalued so that our sort of stronger emotions tend to be associated with sex rather than with friendship and I think one of the ways in which one can make it easier for oneself to observe chastity, at least to some extent is by strengthening one's friendships, by strengthening one's emotional friendships as it were, and investing more of one's emotional energy in one's friendships so that that energy doesn't, sort of, automatically flow into purely sexual channels.

So these are just some odd comments. I think I've made most of these points before on various occasions. For some of you it will be more or less familiar ground. But I think perhaps in a way the most important point I've made, and I think it's new to most of you, I don't think I've made it properly

before is this point that one shouldn't think of oneself as either chaste or unchaste but as, inasmuch as one is committed to the spiritual life, working towards a higher degree of chastity from whatsoever position, from whatsoever original starting point, whether from the starting point of someone who is by nature, let's say, well just a randy old man or a randy young man or someone who by nature in a quite healthy way doesn't have much of a taste for sex. But whichever it may be one should try to be working towards a higher degree of brahmacharya, a greater absorption in a higher level of consciousness, a more blissful level, a more illumined level. And this is, well really one might say, it's all about.

All right now for something again completely different.

"In our time the historicity of Sakyamuni the Buddha appears to be accepted unquestioningly by all scholars including atheists, rationalists, and Christians. But what is the evidence that a man, Gautama Siddhartha, ever lived? Buddhists will be satisfied by the Buddhist tradition, oral and written, but why should that satisfy non-Buddhists or is there any evidence other than the Buddhist scriptures?"

Well, first of all, it is a fact that the historicity of the Buddha, Sakyamuni, does appear to be accepted unquestioningly. In the last century one or two people did maintain, one or two scholars did maintain that the Buddha's whole life story was in fact reducible to astronomical, especially solar, mythology, but that idea has been completely discarded. So, yes, all scholars including atheists, rationalists and Christians do accept, or appear to accept unquestioningly the historicity of the Buddha but then, "What evidence is there that a man, Gautama Siddhartha, ever lived?" Perhaps it's as well to put it around the other way. I mean, people generally believe he did exist, is there any evidence or what is the evidence that in fact he didn't? So this raises the question as to why one starts to doubt the existence of a person who hitherto was believed, historically speaking, to have existed in the past. I mean, why don't we question the historicity of Napoleon, or Julius Caesar or all sorts of people who live in the past, Homer and so on and so forth.

So what is the reason we start questioning the historicity of a figure hitherto deemed historic? I haven't really given my mind to this before, looking at the question, but it seems to me just speaking off the cuff, that there are two reasons. One, if the documentary evidence is so scanty that though lots of people might believe that someone did exist in the past, that there's really no grounds for believing because so little in the way of documentary evidence or hard archaeological evidence has in fact come down to us. And secondly, one begins to doubt the historicity of a personage hitherto believed to have been historic when, on examination, the documents concerning him, the records of his life and perhaps his teaching turn out to be contradictory so that no consistent picture emerges. For instance, you might get a document saying that he lived in such a such a century and another document saying that he lived centuries later. Well then you begin to have your doubts as to whether he really existed at all. Maybe that's a too simple example, but that's the sort of thing I had in mind.

So in the case of the Buddha, Sakyamuni, what has happened? Well, there are no great or obvious inconsistencies in the literature, in the documents, in the evidence that has come down to us, but it must also be said that so far those documents have not really been subjected to a very thoroughgoing scrutiny. That is to say, the documents mainly in Pali and Sanskrit and their various translations in Tibetan and Chinese. We know very well that in the case of the New Testament, especially in the case of the gospels for the last two hundred years and more, those documents have been subjected to minute scrutiny. There are tens of thousands of books in the European languages dealing with the question in one way or another of the historicity of Christ, what sort of person, what sort of man he was, and whether he really existed at all. Scholars have not as yet come to any conclusion that is generally accepted. Christians go on believing, broadly speaking, in the Christ of the gospels but

scholars certainly don't. But they've got different Christs. They've come up with different Christs. I've recently been reading some very plausible literature according to which Christ was a magician and learned his magic in Egypt and the author makes out a very good case indeed for as you read you're really quite convinced. But another author I read a few years ago made out a case for Christ being actually a sort of terrorist, a zealot, rebelling against Roman rule and when one reads that, again one is quite convinced. And others again they don't believe in the historicity of Christ. They reduce him to an eschatological myth or something of that sort. And again when one reads those works one is quite convinced. So it isn't easy to make up one's mind.

But anyway the point I'm making is that in the case of the historicity of Christ which is the leading case of this sort in the west, the more one goes through the literature, I mean, the greater doubt there seems to be. The less clear it seems to be whether he did exist and whether he didn't and if he did what he was really like. But nonetheless the texts have been scrutinised by what has come to be called the higher criticism.

In the case of the corresponding Buddhist literature this has not yet been done. So it may well be that at present the historicity of the Buddha is unquestioningly accepted but I'm not so sure that that will necessarily continue. It may be that scholars get to work on the Pali and Sanskrit texts in much the same way that they got to work on the Greek texts of the New Testament in which case we may have some serious thinking to do. But I personally rather doubt whether the historicity of the Buddha will in the long run ever be brought seriously in question just because the picture that emerges through a reasonably close reading, at least of the Pali Canon is so consistent with itself and because we can see the stages and the development of the myth associated with the Buddha quite clearly. In the case of Christ you've got the myth from the beginning. There isn't a stage of historicity succeeded by a stage of myth. But in the case of the corresponding Buddhist literature you can see, as it were, the historical Buddha, and then you can see within the scriptures themselves the legendary and the mythological elements gradually being added and elaborated upon and you can, more or less, separate the one from the other, even though you can't draw a very precise dividing line.

So you feel much more easily I think and naturally, in the case of the Buddha, that yes, it did all start from someone who, for want of a better term, we call an historical character or a real human being. So perhaps there's not much more than that we can say on that particular subject.

All right. I'm afraid the questioners are springing all sorts of surprises on us. There's something very different now. (Pause)

"In what respect is competitiveness a serious threat to the Order? When is competition healthy and when is it not?"

I think I certainly would say that competition is of two kinds - healthy and unhealthy. So what does one mean by healthy competition? Competition, of course, is always between at least two people so let's keep it simple and discuss the whole question in terms of competition between two people. When two people are competing what are they actually doing? When two people compete they are both trying to do the same thing. They're both trying to reach the same goal. They're both trying to win the same thing. It may be a race. It may be even a kingdom. It may be an argument. It may be a woman. But they're both after the same thing. All right, so competition is healthy when they have the same aim, the same object, and the fact that somebody else is after the thing that they're after spurs them on to a greater and further effort than they might otherwise perhaps have made. Do you see this point? So competition is healthy when the object which you're striving for is something which is intrinsically desirable. Something the achievement of which is in the interests of your

personal development, let us say. Part of a healthy human life, and when you use, so to speak, the fact that you're competing against another person, against another human being, to do better than you normally would do but not with any idea of, so to speak doing the other person down. Not with any ill will towards the other person, not having recourse to any unfair means.

Now if you have recourse to any unfair means it means that the purely formal achievement of the objective, the formal as opposed to the real achievement of the objective has become the major consideration. For instance, if you want to win say the 100 yards sprint against another person. All right, the fact that you're competing against another person which rouses your competitive spirit, makes you run faster perhaps than you otherwise would have done. So you use that fact, you use the competitiveness so that you run faster and, yes, perhaps you do win the race, but the object is not so much to win the race as to run as fast as you possibly can. Do you see what I mean? If in order to win the 100 yards sprint and win the race you trip the other person without being seen, or you take steroids or something of that sort and you cheat, well that is unhealthy competitiveness because you're thinking in terms of winning technically rather than thinking of terms of doing your best. So if, even within the context of the spiritual life you use your competitiveness to spur you on to do better but without trying to do the other person down and without trying just to win for the sake of winning, but trying all the time to do better and if you have even good will to the other person because he's helping you to do better, your competitor is helping you to do better then that is healthy competition and the reverse of that is unhealthy competition. Do you see what I mean? Perhaps it isn't altogether clear, perhaps I haven't made it as clear as it could be made, but I think it is important not to exclude the element of competitiveness, one, because it is useful and two, because it is very, very deeply inherent in people and I think it's very, very difficult to shut it out. If you don't sort of openly and honestly admit it it will creep in, I think, in all sorts of surreptitious ways. You might find two people sitting in the shrine and they might have a sort of competition as to who can sit and meditate longest. So it might be a quite healthy sort of thing because each is spurring on the other but if one does actually succeed in at least sitting longer than the other, well, the one who is as it were defeated, is defeated, doesn't mind. Well, that's fine. He did better than me, but he obliged me to do my best. Without him I wouldn't have done as well as I have done. I wouldn't have sat and meditated as long. He's helped me to do that. He's helped me to stick at it. He's the better man so congratulations to him. You're quite happy with that.

So you can have that sort of healthy competitiveness even within the context of the spiritual life. So from this it is clear coming back to the question of "in what respect is competitiveness a serious threat to the Order", well, it's only a serious threat to the Order when it is of the negative kind, or one might even say, of the neurotic kind, when winning in the purely formal sense, technical sense, becomes all important and you're prepared to do the other person down in order to win. So that is a threat to the Order but one might even say that healthy competitiveness if it really is healthy is something that can far from being a threat to the Order it could even help to keep the Order together because in that way you're all keeping one another on your toes. I mean, who can do better, who can do best in the objective sense, best for everybody's sake, not for the sake just of the person who is doing best.

All right so much about competitiveness. I have said this before on several connections so perhaps I don't need to go into it any more. Then two:

"Ananda mentioned yesterday how some of our mantras were introduced. Can you tell us a little of the history concerning mantra chanting in our pujas?"

My own recollections don't quite coincide with Ananda's. I think perhaps Ananda didn't quite distinguish between two different trends or strands in our mantra chanting. The first trend or strand is

that of the seven mantras at the end beginning with the 'Om mani padme hum'. To the best of my recollection we've chanted those ever since we introduced the Sevenfold Puja and I introduced the Sevenfold Puja not just on the occasion of the founding of the Friends. I introduced it even when I was at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara. I must say though I don't remember whether at that time, that is to say, when I introduced the Sevenfold Puja at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, I included those concluding mantras or not. I really can't recollect. But certainly they were included as from the time that the Sevenfold Puja was introduced into the FWBO.

But as regards the chanting of other mantras, or rather the chanting of one of those mantras in a particular way, and that's the Padmasambhava mantra which we chant to a particular tune, again to the best of my recollection that did emanate from Samye-ling via Ananda. I have a fairly distinct recollection that Ananda spent some time up at Samye-ling and he learned or acquired that tune there and I did, yes, I overheard it and I thought it's good that we incorporated that and I believe we had a few experimental sessions and I also seem to remember that Ananda at one point used to accompany the chanting with a little pair of Indian cymbals. Or even on one or two other little instruments, I'm not quite sure but I think we tried to sort of develop a musical accompaniment but I'm afraid we failed. It was just premature or we didn't have any trained musicians around, even though Ananda did play the piano. (Laughter) But yes, it was from that, I think - that was in the Archway days, the Pundarika days, so ever since, we've we've chanted the Padmasambhava mantra in that particular way with that Tibetan tune. At least, I think it's a Tibetan tune, I won't even guarantee that because for all we know it could have been introduced into Samye-ling by one of their Western devotees who knew something about music. But it certainly, so far as we are concerned comes from Samye-ling.

And then of course there was the little tune that goes with the Tara mantra. I won't be quite so sure but I think that came from the same source or much the same source at a somewhat later date, perhaps two or three years later. So that's the history concerning mantra chanting in our pujas. It's a very little history, very limited history, let's hope in future days we've rather more to say on the subject because there's much more mantra chanting perhaps with more beautiful musical accompaniment. All right. (Pause)

"Many Order members seem to find difficulty in visualising in the sense of evoking an eidetic image. Whilst you have said that what is important is the feeling evoked by the meditation rather than the creation of a mental image, do you think it might be useful to think in terms of a more structured training in visualisation beginning with kasinas and gradually elaborating?"

I think this may well be so. In fact I think I've referred to this more than once in the past. But in a way we do have, one might say, a sort of graduated training because when we do a usual visualisation practice we start off with the blue sky, don't we, which is just a single expanse of colour. If one found that difficult, and of course, everybody does to begin with, one could start off with just say a blue disc and if one found even that difficult, yes, one could start off with a blue kasina, that is to say, one could paint say a blue disc on a sheet of paper and put it up on the wall and sit in front of that, focus one's attention on that in the traditional way, first of all concentrating on the actual disc of material colour and then closing one's eyes trying to reproduce that then as it faded, opening, having another look. In that way getting some sort of yes, mental picture, for want of a better term, of that blue disc. And then when that was reasonably stable then trying to expand it into a blue sky. And then of course once one has visualised the blue sky, well, there's the lotus, the lotus seat to visualise and one can spend quite a lot of time on that and then on that the moon mat.

So in fact it is, one might say, a graduated practice but perhaps we could make it more graduated than it is even at present and perhaps we could even have meditation retreats which were designed to help us build up our visualisation, whatever it might be from the very beginning, spending a lot of

time on each successive stage, just to build up the visualisation more and more clearly and more and more successfully. That might well be a very useful thing, especially in the case of those people who do find it particularly difficult to visualise. I think some of you know that I have been speaking recently in terms of an upgrading of meditation in the Movement. I think I even saw a question, I think in my correspondence recently or it might have been in some minutes, a question with regard to a sort of course for meditation teachers. In a way I think that would be a bit premature because I think first of all we've got to have not say a course for meditation teachers, not a course to say help them teach meditation, but a course to help people or courses to help people practice meditation to begin with more successfully than some at least are able to do at present. And then perhaps out of that will grow special courses for people who want to spend more of their time teaching meditation.

Again I've spoken quite a bit in recent months or maybe even in the course of the last year about something which is quite basic and which I've noticed from time to time, that is posture. I think so, quite a lot of people don't pay sufficient attention to their posture when they're sitting and meditating and I've asked yoga teachers within the Order to correct people's postures whenever they see that they need correction. And I would suggest that you're not shy about it, you're not, if you're a yoga teacher and you know what is a correct posture, you are not shy about correcting people's postures or giving them advice about their postures or demonstrating. And I also suggest that those whose postures are incorrect, whether they know it or not, take it in good part, in fact with thankfulness, any sort of correction advice that they may get from a yoga teacher. It's all to their benefit. They will be able to meditate better. I've also been thinking that cushions need more attention. Now when I was in India I never used a cushion. In India meditation cushions are quite unknown. I'd not even seen one until I came to England, strange to say. And of course they originate in Japan. They're said to have originated, because the Japanese being of a different race from the Indians, have got shorter legs, shorter in relation to the length of their bodies and they can't get their legs crossed so easily but if they sit up a bit higher they can cross their legs, more comfortably. So this is the explanation that has been given. Whether Europeans as Caucasians like the Indians really need this sort of cushion, that's another matter. Perhaps people in the West do because they normally sit on chairs, they're not accustomed to crossing their legs or sitting on the floor cross legged like the Indians, so all right we'll take it that we need cushions. But I think we should be careful to see that they are proper cushions and a sort of lumpy, soggy sort of cushion is not a real proper meditation cushion and I think in far too many communities cushions are allowed to get into a terrible state so that sometimes that people pile up three sort of really deflated looking cushions one on top of the other to get a proper height. Now as I've understood it, not that I've been through the Zen tradition or anything like, but as I've understood it a cushion should be round and it should be very springy, but at the same time firm. When you sit on it it shouldn't be so thinly stuffed that you must feel the floor through the cushion. You should almost sort of not exactly bounce on the cushion but you should be almost balanced on it, it should be springy, so that there is no hard pressure on the part of the body which is in contact with the cushion because that will cut off the circulation of blood. You should be quite finely balanced or poised on the cushion which should feel a little springy beneath you - not like a hard lump.

So I think that individuals in centres need to give very close attention to their cushions. I think they need to be restuffed or at least the kapok needs pulling out and sort of, what does one call it? In India they've got a special instrument for this because they have this sort of stuff in pillows and mattresses. A man comes along with something which looks like a harp and he somehow fluffs the hard lumps of kapok on this. It has a twang, twang, twang, twang, twang. It's a very familiar sound around the villages - people who go around doing this. But in the FWBO we don't have any such facility. Perhaps someone who been to India or goes to India should learn this little art get one of these bow-like things and learn how to fluff the kapok and can go round from centre to centre plumping all the cushions for a small fee. It would be a very good means of right livelihood for somebody. [Laughter] A very pleasant occupation. You could just sing or chant as you twanged your harp, as it were, and

you could meditate and travel around centres and see them, by the time you've got around all the centres, well, it would be time to start again because in the interval all the cushions would have gone hard and lumpy again. So your livelihood would be very, very well provided for.

But this is a serious point because these hard lumpy unsatisfactory cushions don't really help meditation at all. You might just as well be sitting on a folded towel like I used to do in India. Do you see what I mean? So I think centre councils and centre chairmen, should pay attention to this. The cushions should be proper firm, taut, plump at the same time springy cushions on which it is a pleasure to sit. Not something into which you sink and through which you feel the floor, or that has all sorts of hard edges and uncomfortable lumps. Well that certainly doesn't encourage meditation. So perhaps more attention could be given to these two very, very basic elementary things. You know, the proper posture and the properly stuffed cushion. After that we'll see. (Pause).

Maybe deal with a couple of relatively lighter questions and then end up with something serious. (Pause) Well, I think it's a lighter question, it might have been asked in dead seriousness.

"The Buddha's assenting by silence. Was it that he was observing a convention of contemporary Sakyan society? If not, why did he give assent by silence? Do you ever give assent by silence?"
(Laughter)

As to the Buddha's assenting by silence being a convention of contemporary Sakyan society I don't think we know. I can't recollect any reference to that custom being an observance of Sakyian society though it is not impossible, especially as it's a sort of social convention. Also the Buddha seems to have given assent by silence only on certain definite occasions. Perhaps even on one kind of occasion and that is to say when he was invited for a meal. I don't recollect that he assented by silence on any other occasion. I think it was only when he was invited for a meal or at the most when he was invited to go somewhere. I don't think he assented by silence to say, metaphysical questions. For instance, is there life after death and the Buddha remained silent apparently assenting. I don't think we have any such instances in the Pali Canon. But certainly he did frequently give assent by silence to someone's request that he would partake along with the bhikkhus of tomorrow's meal at that particular person's house. It's difficult to say why he did it. It may have been Sakyan good manners. It may have been general Indian good manners at that time. I don't think we know. Or it may even have been - this custom - peculiar to the Buddha himself. This is certainly not explicitly stated. He might of course say by way of explanation that the Buddha was a lover of silence so why speak when there was no need to speak. If someone invited him to come to his house the next day for his meal and the Buddha agreed, well, what was the point of saying anything. If he didn't disagree he agreed and silence presumably is better than speech. Speech is silver but silence is golden. The Buddha may have thought in that way, or that may have been his natural tendency or natural inclination. After all he was called the Muni, Sakyamuni, the 'silent sage' of the Sakyan clan. So perhaps he did have a sort of general preference for silence as compared with speech which manifested itself on this occasion.

And then "Do you ever give assent by silence?" I don't think so. Though I think I may say that sometimes people try to oblige me to or even force me to. For instance, this is something I've been a little bit concerned with recently in a general way. In fact I think there's going to be a note about it from Kovida in 'Shabda'. For instance, someone writes me a letter or I get a telephone call saying "Do you advise me to do such and such. If I don't hear from you by return of post I shall do it." (Laughter) In other words if you keep quiet I'll take it that it's all right for me to go ahead. Now this is really not very suitable because sometimes it may be that the person's letter, if it is a letter, doesn't reach me in time or it reaches me just a very short time before that person needs the decision so I've got to think very quickly. It may be I'm very busy with other things. I may be immersed in other

things but that person is almost obliging me to put aside whatever I'm doing in order to consider the question he has asked and come to a conclusion as to whether he should do it or not do it, do that particular thing he has asked about and then make sure that my reply gets to him or to her in good time so that they can act or not act upon whatever I have said.

So certainly in this sort of way I don't like to give assent by silence or to be taken as giving assent by silence. So I think that no Buddhist should ever do this and no-one should ever write and say, well this is what I'm thinking of doing and if I don't hear from you I'll take it that you agree with it. This is really, in a way bringing some kind of pressure. So I don't think I do give assent by silence or want to do so. It does so happen of course, that sometimes people ask me about something or ask for my opinion and I don't say anything but this is to be taken as meaning that I'm not really happy with what they're saying. But for one reason or other I'm not actually saying so. Perhaps it's so obvious that what they want to do or what they suggest, what they're asking about is wrong or out of the question that it seems inappropriate even to say so explicitly. It's as though they should know that. So if I ever do remain silent in response to somebody's question you can perhaps take that as being not at all a good sign. (Laughter) (Pause)

All right.

"I've heard it said that doing a bodhisattva or buddha visualisation practice particularly Vajrasattva can cure deep rooted and even potentially fatal physical illness. Do you have any thoughts on how efficacious this is, assuming the visualisation is done with concentration and devotion?"

I've certainly don't doubt that mind can influence body. I certainly don't doubt that meditation practices of all kinds including visualisation practices can have a very positive and very healthy effect on the physical body. Whether they can actually cure deep rooted and even potentially fatal physical illness I wouldn't like to say. Because we don't really know all that much about illness but I certainly wouldn't like to say that meditation in whatsoever form could not cure, if that is the right word, even such illnesses. But one speaks of potentially fatal. But is that really, so to speak, a scientific category? Can even a doctor be, even a skilled and qualified doctor, be absolutely sure that a certain illness is going to be fatal. I think sometimes that's very difficult to say. So therefore one doesn't really know whether the illness has been cured by the meditation practice or whether it wasn't actually going to be fatal anyway. But as a general rule, as a general principle, I would say that the more positive the mental state, the more beneficial the effect of that state will be upon the body.

But you may be carrying over illnesses which are the result of karmas created in past lives which you can't really do very much about in perhaps in this life. You may even have become so ill or have the disease to such an extent that even the vigorous practice of meditation, though it might have cured you if the disease hadn't been so bad, won't be able to arrest it or cure you inasmuch as it's too far advanced. But I wouldn't like to generalise too much about that. Perhaps it's safest to stick to the general principle that I announced that a positive mental state, a mental state imbued with the, well, the brahma viharas say, is bound to have positive reactions on one's physical state. I mean, under what conditions that might amount to the curing of disease or to what extent the actual curing of disease might be possible or not possible I wouldn't really like to say. I don't think we really have anything concrete to go by as yet.

Those who are interested, especially those with medical qualifications, might like to look into this matter.

(end of tape one tape two)

S: three questions and we'll conclude with those for this evening, leaving some six or eight or nine questions for the next session. (Pause)

"Would you share with us your memories of Mahadhammavira as an inspiration to us? What is the traditional Buddhist view on suicide when the body has become too old and sick? Do you have any reflections to share on the skilfulness of what Mahadhammavira did last month?"

All right. So first of all "Would you share with us your memories of Mahadhammavira as an inspiration to us?" I must say first of all quite frankly, I don't have actually many memories of Mahadhammavira because I didn't meet him all that often. I met him of course only when I went to India and I met him in India on two separate occasions, that is to say on the occasion of my last two visits. The last visit of course, lasted only for three weeks and the one before that I think about three months. So I saw most of Mahadhammavira in the course of that first visit. And I can say that even though I didn't see very much of him compared with how much I see of many of the Order Members in this country and even how much I've seen of some of the Order Members in India, even though I hadn't seen very much of him I had very, very vivid memories of him indeed.

First of all, of course, he was the oldest Order Member in India. I think that with one possible exception he was the oldest Order Member in the Order, in the whole Order. And of course one remembered him, he made a particularly strong impression on that account - just that he was so old. When I first met him I think even then he was over seventy. But then he made a very strong, even a striking impression because though he was so old he was so lively. He was so full of energy. He was so cheerful. So energetic, so full of goodwill and one might say, young at heart. I think one could say that he was characterised by that quality. He was very young at heart. I think that in a way he had always been young at heart but I think when I met him, or during the time that I knew him, even though he was getting older he was younger at heart than ever. One might say that though the body was growing old, the mind or the heart or the soul for want of a better term was growing younger all the time. And that was because he was so happy. I think I can say that he was one of the happiest persons I've met and probably one of happiest persons in the whole Order, even though - you might regard this as a very wild generalisation - even I sometimes thought, the happiest person that I knew in the whole Order. Nothing seemed to get him down. He really was always happy, always joyful, under whatsoever conditions and sometimes conditions as we travelled around Maharashtra were quite difficult. They weren't so difficult for me because special care was taken of me because I had to give lectures, I had to be protected from dust and even then I did catch sore throats and get fever and all that sort of thing but I'm afraid, I'm sorry to say that sometimes there was no sort of special care or special protection for Mahadhammavira, not that he wanted it, oh no. He thought caring for and giving protection to others who were young enough to be his grandsons. He didn't mind hardship, he was used to hardship like so many of our friends there.

And under all these hardships, all the inconvenience. The long, long hours spent in crowded buses, sometimes standing and not sitting down, or not having a proper place to sleep at night or staying up late night after night, travelling during the night. No, it didn't damp his cheerfulness in the least, or his good temper, his goodwill, even his energy. It didn't seem to affect him, at least not at that time at all. But what was most amazing was this constant and ever-increasing cheerfulness and happiness. And he was quite aware of this and he knew perfectly well why he was happy and he was happy because he'd met with the Order, he'd met with the Sangha at last. The real Sangha. I mean Nagabodhi talked a bit about this didn't he the other day. About the struggle that so many of our friends have to come in contact with the real Dharma, real Buddhism, practical Buddhism, after they'd become nominally Buddhists. And some of them had been struggling for upwards of twenty years before they came in contact with the FWBO searching for Buddhism and he was one of those because before he came in contact with the FWBO, as those of you know, I think, who've read

Ashvajit's brief biography, he was a sramanera but he wasn't very satisfied or very happy as a sramanera because he wasn't getting regular teaching, he wasn't getting training, he wasn't getting contact, he wasn't getting spiritual fellowship. He was just a sramanera on his own. As in a sense I was for some years in India. Of course I was on my own to some extent even as a bhikshu and in some ways the whole time I was in India, one might say, in some respects.

So he as a sramanera was very much on his own but he didn't want to be on his own but he wanted really to practise the Dharma, he wanted to study the Dharma, he wanted to practise meditation, he wanted spiritual friends, and when he came into contact with the FWBO, especially with the Order, at the age of about seventy he found at last the tail end or as the Indians say the fag end, of his life, he had all these things and he was so happy he was really overwhelmed with joy. I touched upon this when I spoke down at the LBC, and I there, on that occasion, drew the moral that we in this country at least, we don't always realise the value and the greatness of what we have. I mean, perhaps we don't even realise the greatness and the value of being all together on this occasion. I mean there are people, there are Order Members in the world who I could almost say, would almost give their eyes to be with us but they can't, for various practical reasons. They'd love to be with us, probably they're thinking of us at this very moment, but they can't be. And we can and for some of us it's very easy, some of us don't even have to walk more than a few dozen yards to be here. Others have to travel only a few hundred miles and it's nothing really when you think of it.

So everything comes so easily, there are communities, there are co-ops there are centres, there's literature. There's support for some. There's the dole, the much dispraised and despised dole. For us in a way it's so easy and we don't always appreciate the opportunities that we've got because they come to us, in a way, so easily, possibly as the result of previous good karma, and they come to us very early in life and you know we can look ahead and we can think in terms, all being well, of ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, even sixty years in the Sangha, in the Order, and as Order members. Growing in wisdom and compassion and general maturity, year by year, decade by decade, till by the time we're fifty or sixty we'll be incredibly wise and kind [Laughter] and radiating light in all directions. Having had such a very, very good start from the very beginning, and not really having to struggle. Again there is something purely fortuitous here.

I was reading somewhere that in Japan, and this is Bhante just going apparently completely off the track (Laughter) but there's a bit of a connection. In Japan on a certain festival they put up a flag outside the house and if there's a son living in the house the flag carries the emblem or the picture of a carp, the fish called the carp. So why is this? I don't know whether this has a basis in natural history but the Japanese believe that the carp always struggles, always fights its way upstream. It goes against the stream. So this is supposed to be in Japan, an heroic quality. The hero goes against the stream. Against what everybody else is doing, against the group, against the herd, against the mass, against samsara, against the conditioned. So to be a hero this is what you have to do and in the end the carp reaches, apparently, the source of the stream. So, I couldn't help being reminded of Mahadhammavira, that he really deserved a sort of carp emblem. He struggled against the stream all his life, right up to the time he was seventy, but when he was seventy he made it. He came to the source. He came to the head of the stream and he was so happy he was gambolling in the stream, and you might say his scales were sort of flashing and gleaming and his eyes were getting bigger and bigger and he had a big smile and he was so overjoyed, it was quite touching to see this old man's happiness. I mean I've never seen another old man like that. I've seen some quite saintly old men but I've never seen any old men so absolutely overflowing with joy as old Mahadhammavira was.

And he was also so helpful so serviceable, he'd do anything for anybody. He was very kind. I think that he had a very warm feeling for the other Order members, the mitras, he liked to do things for them and he was always overflowing with goodwill. In this connection I think it was Mallika told

the little story. She said he insisted on coming to the Poona railway station and seeing her off and he was so happy to have met her that in a sense without thinking, though he was an Anagarika, he grasped her by the hand, I mean he completely forgot that's it's a woman, not that she minded at all, but he completely forgot his Indian conditioning, you might say, he just grasped her by the hand. He was so happy, so pleased to have met her and was sending her off with such goodwill, and she was very touched by this and of course he realised what he was doing, he just laughed and she laughed too, and probably others who were present laughed. But he was very much like that and you felt this tremendous goodwill. So I think these were his two great characteristics his happiness and cheerfulness and joy and kindness and goodwill of a very, very genuine quality.

There was nothing put on, or nothing sentimental. Actually he was a bit gruff in manner. He'd give the Refugees and Precepts almost like a sergeant major he'd sort of fire them off. There was nothing graceful in the way he did it, in fact nothing very graceful in the way he wore his robes or spoke. He was a bit of a rough customer, a rough diamond because that's the sort of social level he came from but that just didn't matter at all because you could see that though the diamond was a bit rough, well it really was a diamond, and a very big and a very precious one. You could see this very clearly and another thing I remember about him - he was never too old to learn. When he heard that I was coming to India and, of course, he was hoping to be ordained, he started learning English. Yes at the age of, a new language at the age of seventy and actually he made some progress. He was able to speak a little English by the time I arrived. But of course we didn't have very much need for it because he hadn't been told that, or perhaps he had been told, I don't remember, that I spoke Hindi or at least a bit of Hindi but when we came together he found I soon got back my Hindi and I was talking to him in Hindi quite fluently and he was really pleased that he'd expressed himself quite easily and naturally in Hindi and didn't have to fall back on his recently acquired English, but he had acquired some English so he was like that. I mean, though he was such an old man he was ready to have a go at learning something quite new. And that again was a great characteristic of his and perhaps I need hardly say that he was in a sense quite a humble sort of person, no sort of pride, no sort of ambition, he seemed totally devoid of those things, they seemed to have no meaning for him whatever again to a quite surprising degree. Not that he was self-consciously modest or self-consciously didn't have ambition. One could say that those words just didn't exist in his vocabulary, they just weren't in his dictionary, he never thought in those sort of terms, either to be like that or even not to be like that. He just quite naturally it would seem risen above all those things. He was also quite practical, he was quite self-sufficient. He didn't like particularly anyone to do things for him. He was much happier doing things for other people. He was a very hardy old man. He was very strenuous and quite hard working. So these are just, I mean, some memories of Mahadhammavira that come to me, just at this moment and I mean, I hope that they are an inspiration.

So "What is the traditional Buddhist view on suicide when the body has become too old and sick?" Traditional Buddhist view. I can't cite any scriptural passage here though there are scriptural passages which seem to support 'suicide', single inverted commas. There's the famous case of Godika that I've referred to more than once but that wasn't the case of Godika's body being too old and sick, rather of his being able to sustain, unable to sustain a certain spiritual attainment so he committed suicide while he was in that particular state of attainment and the Buddha did not criticise him and from the Buddha's comment afterwards, it would seem that he had gained enlightenment. But certainly in some forms of Buddhist tradition it's not considered reprehensible to, not commit suicide but to allow oneself to die, especially by not taking food, not taking nourishment if one feels one is too old and too sick to be of any use which is of course what Mahadhammavira in the end did feel. It should of course be clear that suicide as it is normally understood is definitely condemned and prohibited in Buddhism. That is to say, suicide as a result of unskilful mental states, when you feel desperate or very angry with someone or very angry with yourself or you're in despair or you're

afraid or you just can't face the music, you can't face the results of your own actions, so you escape from the situation by killing yourself - this is definitely condemned in Buddhism, it's considered simply self-murder and is one of the most serious offenses.

But allowing yourself to die, especially by not taking nourishment when you're too old to be of any use and perhaps of a burden on others, that's a quite different matter and I think I've often mentioned that the teacher of one of my teachers who was a well known Buddhist scholar in India did commit 'suicide', single inverted commas, in this way. He just stopped taking food. He was about seventy then and in the course of about three weeks he just gradually faded gently and peacefully away.

So "Do you have any reflections to share on the skilfulness of what Mahadhammavira did last month", that is to say committing suicide by immolating himself. He certainly, I mean, judging by the accounts which I've read and the letters which he left he seems to have been in a perfectly sound and balanced state of mind at the time and also he seems to have been in a very positive state of mind because, by all accounts, he was happy and cheerful on that last retreat of his and had planned it all in advance. He knew exactly what he was doing. So I can't really, so to speak, find it in my heart to say that it was an unskilful thing that he did. Had he asked me if he should do it I think I would have said he shouldn't. But now that he's done it as it were, I can't say that he did wrongly. Perhaps if one was to say he did the right thing or did a skilful thing one would be misunderstood so I don't say that. But I certainly don't say that he did anything unskilful, and I certainly don't think that what he did would be to his own detriment under the law of karma. So I'm not as it were saying that that's a good sort of thing to do. I'm certainly not encouraging anybody ever to act in that way, but in Mahadhammavira's case, now that he has done that, now that he has disappeared from the scene, physically speaking, in that sort of way, I cannot but say that my feelings with regards to him and his action are entirely positive. Even though mingled with some regret that we've lost, in a way one of the ornaments of our Order. But no doubt he will remain a memory and not just a memory, but a very living memory that will become part of the total tradition of the Western Buddhist Order as I more or less said at the end of my little poem, I really do feel that he departed in a blaze of glory. (Pause)

Nagabodhi: Thank you Bhante. Really quite an extraordinary evening in the amount of dimensions we've traversed, the land we've covered. It's really quite remarkable. As Bhante himself said there are Order Members in India who would give their eyes to be here and I at one point earlier on in the evening I was thinking that. Sometimes they would ask me, is it possible to see Bhante in England? Does he appear, does he answer questions? and if you'd say, 'Well, yes, sometimes he has question and answer sessions, or you can go and visit him at Padmaloka, they close their eyes and imagine it as if trying to savour some utterly perfect dream and yet we're so lucky because here we are and we've had, this evening, we've had so many evenings and sessions and there's another one to come. We are very, very lucky. I have just one memory for the moment anyway of Mahadhammavira that came to my mind as Bhante was talking about him, which I feel is very appropriate to this occasion. We were staying one night in a town called Manmad(?), a railway town. Very dusty, very smoky and very noisy. Bhante and I were eating breakfast together in the morning, and he confessed he'd not slept a wink. I was telling him I'd had bad night but he was being a bit competitive (Laughter). He claimed that he'd not slept a wink so it was ...

S: Bugs!

Nagabodhi: Bugs! It was bugs. (Laughter) So we were sitting in this rather dingy hotel cafe down on the ground floor and Bhante and I were at one table and other people were scattered around, other people from our party were scattered around the cafe, as well as a lot of ordinary Indian working people who were just there to drink chai and eat a few samosas before starting the day, and suddenly

into the room walked Mahadhammavir. I think he came down from upstairs and he was in his robes, and very strong and upright and he approached Bhante in the middle of this cafe, very firm he raised his hand (Laughter obscuring speech and obvious acting out on Nagabodhi's part) I couldn't put it better myself.

Thank you Bhante. (Applause)

(End of tape two)

(tape three side one)

NEXT SESSION

Nagabodhi: Question: "If we want to transform ignorance into wisdom what is the very first thing that we should do?" Answer: "Pay very close attention to everything that is said during the next two hours." (Laughter and Applause)

Sangharakshita: This will of course be our last question and answer session of the present convention. I was thinking a few days ago that we probably wouldn't be having enough questions for another session but in fact during the last couple of days quite a few more questions have come in. So much so that I think I probably won't be able to answer them all. A little while ago I had them all spread out on the floor of my study. I was trying to sort them out into categories but I found this a quite impossible task because they are a very mixed bunch indeed. I was only able to form one category that contained some three or four items and I labelled it provisionally 'psychological and spiritual' which is already a bit miscellaneous. (Laughter) But nearly all the other questions just seemed to be in a class of their own. You know, one question about co-ops and so on. So I'm just going to take them, as it were, as they come and deal with them as best I can. I shall probably, if anything, be avoiding the complicated questions rather than the simple and straightforward ones.

So let's see what we have in the bag this evening. Start off with a question which to some extent links up with the first of the talks that we had yesterday evening. The question goes:

"Which if any of our western European writers, i.e. poets, dramatists, novelists, essayists, come closest in your opinion to conveying an experience of the Dharma and what critique do you use to assess this?"

I'd say that in a way, none of them come close to conveying an experience of the Dharma. Presumably by experience of the Dharma we mean ultimately an experience if not of enlightenment, of something that reflects enlightenment from however great a distance with some degree of clarity. But I don't think we can say that any of our western writers do that. But that is not to say that they are not useful and helpful from the Dharmic point of view, not useful and helpful to us in leading our spiritual lives. Because although they don't in fact, in a sense, convey an experience of the Dharma they can again in another sense be made to convey an experience of the Dharma. I'm not sure that this is at all clear. I mean, in a way, Kovida's talk illustrated this as regards a particular play of Shakespeare, because supposing you were to give, let's say, an orthodox Buddhist, perhaps a Buddhist from the east or a western Buddhist who was simply a follower of some eastern tradition; supposing you gave him or her a sort of text book or standard work on Buddhism and then a play by Shakespeare, maybe even 'Measure for Measure' and you were to ask that person whether there was much in common between the two, in all likelihood they'd say there was nothing in common at all and as from the point of view of the Dharma or the spiritual life, well, to read Shakespeare, to study 'Measure for Measure' was really a waste of time. But, nonetheless, I think most of us would agree that last night Kovida did succeed in showing that 'Measure for Measure' or certain parts at least of 'Measure for Measure', even the whole of it when viewed from a certain point of view was relevant to the Dharma, and relevant to the spiritual life. But I don't think you'd be able to bring that out, I don't think you'd be able to make the connection unless you had, in the first place, a fairly deep, not exactly experience of the Dharma, but perhaps insight into it at least with a small 'i'. And we're really trying to relate it to your own life at every level and also had a deeper understanding of English literature itself, and individual works of English literature than is usually found in the English departments of our universities.

So these works, the works of our poets, dramatists, and so on, do not, as it were, on the surface convey an experience of the Dharma but it is as though if you go sufficiently deeply into both the Dharma and these works of English literature, on the basis of your own experience so far, and perhaps a certain amount of insight even with a small 'i', I think you can make the connection and, as it were, make the work of English literature concerned a means for you at least of some further and deeper experience of the Dharma. I think it would be as fair to say that. It isn't that you can just quote this particular author, quote Shakespeare, quote Dickens or quote Byron, and say, well, this is just an expression of the Dharma, this is exactly what the Dharma says. It is not so clear, simple and straightforward as that. But all our greatest poets and dramatists and novelists were people with deep experience of life and insight, at least with a small 'i'. They expressed their insight in their own way, in the terms of their own particular literary form, which was very, very rarely in terms of abstract ideas which might easily be identified with the sort of abstract ideas that we find in Buddhist literature.

So one has quite a bit of work to do oneself before something of the Dharma can emerge from these works. You have to interpret, reinterpret, translate. But that I think is a good thing. In a way it's an indispensable thing because you are then engaged with the work and that work is taken up, so to speak, into your own individual experience, even your own spiritual experience, it becomes a part of it. So in a sense I would reply in the negative to the question but also perhaps more importantly in another sense reply in the affirmative. This probably isn't very clear but perhaps one needs just to go into a particular work of English literature and look at it from a Dharmic point of view and see what you can find in it.

It's not that it is in the work of literature or that it is not in it. It's also not exactly that you put it into it. A great work of literature, like a great work of visual art also, is sort of multi-dimensional. You can read meanings into it. In a sense those meanings are implicit in it, in a sense they're not. It's as though you make your encounter with that particular work of art, if it's a sufficiently great work of art or work of literature, a sort of starting point for a new departure, a new creative departure of your own which is part of your own spiritual life and your own spiritual development and your own spiritual odyssey. Perhaps I won't say more than that. Perhaps it needs a little essay or something of that sort. Perhaps someone will provide one.

All right.

"Do you think music has a value to practising Buddhist? Why do you think Buddhism has not developed its own tradition of music excluding mantra chanting? And would you encourage the development of a musical tradition within the FWBO, i.e. a tradition of creating our own music?"

I think this whole question of music is a quite interesting one because I think practically everybody in the FWBO does enjoy music in some form or other, more often than not, in the form of Western classical music. So then the question arises, well what is the relation between that and our spiritual lives? Is it just a sort of bit of entertainment, a bit of light relief, something that we turn to when we're fed up with meditation and Dharma study and spiritual friendship and packing beans and all the rest of it. Or does it have an actual relation to our spiritual life.

I'm going to approach this question rather indirectly via Sufism. The subject of the place of music in spiritual life has been debated at great length among the Sufis and Sufism as a whole has not come to a final definite conclusion on the matter. There are two parties one might say among the Sufis, broadly speaking. One party being in favour of music, so Sufic sessions in which music is employed are apparently called (Sama?) and the other party among the Sufis is definitely not in favour. The arguments which fly back and forth are rather interesting. Those Sufis who are in favour of music as

a part of spiritual life, an integral part of spiritual life, are very aware of the importance of what we have come to call the emotional element in spiritual life. They are very much aware that without a strong, even a passionate, emotional element spiritual life can be very dry, very uninteresting and not get very far. So they believe that with the help of music one's emotions, one's higher emotions even, can be raised and then those higher emotions can be directed towards whatever they consider to be ultimate.

So they are very much in favour of music for that sort of reason. But those who are not in favour of music among the Sufis point out that over-indulgence in music, enjoyment of music beyond a certain point can lead to a sort of intoxication, can lead to what they call, a 'loss of sobriety'. Some Sufis attach great importance to what they call sobriety, I'm not sure what is the Arabic or Persian word in the original, but it's usually translated as sobriety and it would seem to correspond very roughly to our mindfulness and awareness. So they point out that under the influence of music, especially it would seem the kind of music that Sufis, especially Indian Sufis, listen to, sobriety can be cast to the winds. One loses as we would say one's mindfulness and one's awareness so they are against music or not in favour of music in spiritual life for that reason. So we can clearly see that there's much to be seen on both sides of the argument.

Among Buddhists the Theravadins of course see no place for music in the spiritual life. The monk is not supposed even to listen to music of any kind, and they do not make any distinction apparently in modern times between music of a more popular character and what we would call classical music. On the other hand, in Tibetan Buddhism and in Chinese Buddhism, Japanese Buddhism music is used to a limited extent. My personal views on this are as follows:

I think in the context of Buddhism and Buddhism in the West music can be quite useful in the context of the spiritual life because we know that one of things that can happen is that people get out of contact with their emotions and can become very sort of emotionally dry and their spiritual life can lack zest. So I think a discriminating use of music of the right sort can be quite helpful. Some people claim that they need to listen to rock music in order to get in touch with their emotions. If that is so, it means I'm afraid that they're functioning on a quite low level. It may be that they need even to listen to rock music but they're on such a low level I'm afraid that one can't really speak of that as being part of their spiritual life and spiritual development in the strict sense.

But sometimes, yes, if you've done a lot of study, if you've been immersed in perhaps co-op management affairs, and perhaps you don't feel like reading poetry, sometimes music can give you a little sort of emotional lift. But then what you must be careful to do is not just indulge that, not just go on listening and listening, just listen to a little, maybe just for a few minutes. Listen until you definitely feel a strong positive emotion within yourself and then just leave the music, switch off the music, take off the record or cassette or whatever and just be quiet for a bit, savouring as it were your more emotionally positive state and then try to put, try to direct, your emotional positivity into more definitely spiritual channels. In other words you're using music more like a sort of medicine. Use it as a medicine perhaps more than as a food because if you're getting from your meditation the a sort of experience that you ought to be getting if you're meditating every day, you shouldn't need something like to music except on quite exceptional occasions. But I see no objection in principle to the judicious mindful aware use of music, especially music of a more refined kind when you feel that you really need to take advantage of that sort of exterior or external help.

Now "Would you encourage the development of a musical tradition within the FWBO?" i.e. a tradition of creating our own music. Well, what does one mean by one's own music? If one means simply people following their own bent, following their own whim, well, I wouldn't be altogether in favour of that, but if one means by one's own music, the development of an actual musical tradition

within the FWBO, a musical tradition by means of which, or with the help of which, that kind of music was produced which definitely did have an elevating effect on the mind and was helpful in helping us to reconnect with our emotions and even uplift us spiritually, I would be very much in favour of that. But unless some musical genius arises we're not going to create that sort of tradition for quite a long time, perhaps even for generations. It's not the work of a day or a week or a year. It's a work that will take us a very long time to complete but in principle, yes, I think I would like to see this develop. But that doesn't mean that someone who has a musical education imports into the FWBO, music from the outside so that we perform that music ourselves. That is not really our own music. It's not just a question of making music ourselves but creating music, composing and performing music ourselves, which is in accordance with what we are basically trying to do.

The same with regards to say, poetry. It's not just a question of someone within the FWBO just carrying on writing the same sort of old poetry that they were writing outside, publishing another slim volume of that type. We've got thousands of slim volumes of that type but if someone is deeply imbued with Buddhism something of Buddhism should percolate through his or her own poetry. It doesn't mean that you necessarily are writing about how the Buddha gained enlightenment or recasting Jataka stories in English verse. It's not that at all but there's some feeling that derives from Buddhism finding expression through your poetry or your painting or whatever, and similarly with the music.

All right. We come now to a quite short question but in a way quite difficult one.

"Much is said within the Friends about friendship and cooperation. In brief what are the principles of friendship? How does friendship relate with Stream Entry and full enlightenment?"

Well, as regards the principles of friendship I think I'm going to leave that one because it's very, very broad and I think I'm going to leave the last part, that is to say "How does friendship relate to full enlightenment" and I'm going to take up as best I can the middle one, that is to say, "How does friendship relate with Stream Entry?" I must admit that before the question was asked I hadn't considered this sort of question so the remarks that I'm going to offer now are only provisional and tentative and introductory and perhaps there is further work to be done upon this.

The line I want to take is as follows: we all know of course what Stream Entry means. Stream Entry is the point of no return. Stream Entry is synonymous with the breaking of the first three fetters, that is to say, *sakaya drsti*, *vicikitsa*, and *silavrataparamarsa*, and this is very familiar ground. It's ground that has been trodden in study groups again and again and again, and you may remember that I've recast this threefold formula in all sorts of ways. I can't in fact remember all the different ways in which I've recast the formula. Perhaps some of you can. So if we are to relate friendship with Stream Entry, we've got to relate friendship with the breaking of the three fetters. So this is the line I want to pursue or rather not pursue, just start pursuing and perhaps some of you can do some homework on this and pursue it a bit further.

First of all, *sakaya drsti* or self view. Can anyone remember some of the alternative versions I've given of this? Habit. Yes. What else? What was another alternative version.

(Various offerings from the audience - inaudible)

S: Clarity. Commitment. And yes creativity. Maybe that's going a little wide of the mark and becoming a bit too general. Maybe I'll stick with habit and take that as my point of departure.

_____ : Eternalism.

S: Yes of course, eternalism, but that wasn't one of my own sort of reinterpretations. Habit. Yes, you're doing the same old thing over and over again. You get into a habit as we say and your life is made up of habits. Your life consists of habits. You are a habit. You are the particular bad habit that a particular stream of consciousness has got into. (Laughter) Yes, a bad habit called Kulananda! (Laughter) No, let's say a good habit called Kulananda. The bad habit was someone called Michael Chaskalson. (Laughter) Anyway so you turn a bad habit into a good habit. You make the habit work against itself. So habit is mechanical. Habit is unaware. Habit is reactive, non-creative etc., etc.

Now, where does friendship come in? If you have a real friendship with someone, a relation of spiritual friendship. If your friendship is really alive your friend will not allow you to just be habitual. He won't allow you to get away with just habitual reactions. He certainly won't allow the spiritual friendship just to become a matter of habit because if it's just a habit, if it's just become a routine of going out for lunch once a week or once a month, that isn't spiritual friendship any longer. So a real spiritual friend will as it were jolt you out of your habitual attitudes, your habitual behaviour. In fact, if two spiritual friends are interacting genuinely they cannot but have this effect on each other. So because they have this sort of effect on each other their spiritual friendship cannot but conduce to the breaking of that first fetter and therefore cannot but conduce to Stream Entry. You see the connection? So I think we could work out a whole series of relationships in this way and show what bearing spiritual friendship has quite directly on the breaking of the three fetters and therefore the gaining of Stream Entry.

Now what about the second, vicikitsa, doubt? Well, it's doubt in the sense of wavering, indecisiveness, inability to make up one's mind, lack of commitment. Well, how can there be lack of commitment, how can there be doubt in the context of spiritual friendship because you're trying to build up trust between yourselves all of the time. Without trust there can be no such thing as spiritual friendship. You've got to be able to rely on him. He's got to be able to rely upon you. You've got to be committed to each other. There can be no wavering, there can be no shilly-shallying. It's got to be absolutely clear-cut. You've got to be sure, perhaps, when your spiritual friendship reaches those heights, that he will die for you and you will die for him if need be. So that also surely, that sort of friendship will work towards the breaking down of that second fetter and therefore work towards the gaining of Stream Entry.

And what about that third one, silavrataparamarsa? Well once I paraphrased that as just going through the motions. Well, there's nothing like a good friend to pull you up when you're just going through the motions. Suppose you ask a friend a question and he just gives you a routine sort of reply. He's just going through the motions of replying. He isn't really thinking, isn't really feeling what he says. Well, you pull him up. You force him to give you a genuinely creative response. So in this way again you are helping, your friendship is helping, your spiritual friendship is helping to break that particular fetter and therefore to help in the attainment of Stream Entry.

Now I've only given a few hints because it's a new question and I haven't thought about this sort of thing before but it is quite a good point and I think we could work out in much greater detail exactly how real spiritual friendship helps us, it helps the parties involved, both of them, to break the three fetters. It's a new angle on spiritual friendship and a quite interesting one. But of course we must first of all have a study, first of all have a quite deep understanding of the three fetters themselves and then perhaps a deep understanding of spiritual friendship and then bring the two together and see how spiritual friendship does act as a solvent so to speak of the three fetters.

I'm quite pleased with this question because I always like new questions rather than questions I've been asked dozens of times before. But this is just a start as it were on answering this question.

(Pause)

"I have heard it said that doing a bodhisattva or buddha visualisation practice particularly Vajrasattva can cure deep rooted and even potentially fatal physical illness. Do you have any thoughts on how efficacious this is assuming the visualisation is done with concentration and devotion?"

Deep rooted and even potentially fatal physical illness. Well, one certainly knows that mind can influence body and one certainly knows that if one is in a bad mental state you might start falling ill. It seems therefore logical to suppose that if you are in a particularly positive state, a sort of state brought about by a visualisation practice, it could have a very beneficial and helpful effect or reaction on the physical body. But this is not to say that you are necessarily be able to cure all ills, all ailments, all diseases, especially serious ones in this way because some diseases may be the result, according to Buddhist teaching, of previous karma, actions committed even in previous lives. But in a way we don't need to know. In a way we don't need to answer this question because we should be doing visualisation practices anyway regardless of whether they do have a beneficial effect on our health or not. I'm sure that they will always have a marginally beneficial effect. Whether they will have a decisively beneficial effect, in the case of serious illness, I can't really say. Perhaps no one except the Buddha could say, who knew all the factors involved including karmic factors. But if of course our visualisation practice does have that marginal beneficial effect on our physical bodies, on our physical health, well, that's just a bonus.

But, of course, in the last analysis we do our visualisation practice as our other meditations for the sake of enlightenment. And would presumably going on doing them even if our health deteriorated.
(Pause)

All right.

"If one goes for Refuge with a teacher and subsequently breaks off that commitment to the spiritual path by resigning is it a) inevitable b) probable c) just conceivable d) totally out of the question" (Laughter). Very logical mind behind this question, "that given enough time after many rebirths one will as a result of suffering ultimately meet the Dharma again and finally gain enlightenment?" (Laughter)

Well, the Buddhist view is that there's hope for all. According to the Mahayana there's hope even for Devadatta. We're told that at this present moment Devadatta in hell, in a particularly nasty, a particularly unpleasant hell, or perhaps we should say, purgatory, because it won't last forever, but we're also told that after so many aeons Devadatta will emerge from that hell having expiated the bad karma he had committed in connection with Sakyamuni the Buddha, during his previous earthly lifetime, and he will eventually find a spiritual path and he will eventually become a Buddha and we're even given in some Mahayana sutras the name that Devadatta will bear as a buddha. So there is hope for all. We all know the story of Angulimala. So again there is hope for all.

So let's look at the question again. If "one goes for Refuge with a teacher and subsequently breaks off that commitment to the spiritual path by resigning is it inevitable, probable, just conceivable, totally out of the question, that given enough time, after many births one will as a result of suffering ultimately meet the Dharma again and finally gain enlightenment?" I won't say that it's inevitable because whatever opportunities one is confronted with, whatever opportunities one meets, one does not have to take advantage of them. One can always refuse. One can always resist. So it isn't inevitable. Probable - we can't say. Just conceivable - well, I wouldn't say just conceivable, I would say certainly conceivable, and certainly not totally out of the question. Not only would I say that, I would say that it isn't even a question of given enough time, after many rebirths, one will as a result

of suffering ultimately reach the Dharma again. You can meet it again in this life because you might have broken off your commitment as regards the teacher with whom you went for Refuge; you might have broken off your commitment to the spiritual path, but you can, as it were, recover that. You can change your mind. You can have a change of heart, what to speak in the course of future lives in this very life itself, you know. The same year, even the same month, even the same day, though perhaps that would be unlikely.

So not only is there is hope for all but there is also the possibility of any human being turning right round within a very short time and we perhaps shouldn't lose sight of that. That's why perhaps sometimes when people do sadly get out of touch with the movement, with the FWBO, even with the Order in the case of Order Members, even resign though we very, very rarely have an resignation now, even then, mentally those who are left behind as it were, in the Order, should not break off contact with that person and certainly should not think negative thoughts with regard to that person. Think as positively of them as they can and direct thoughts of mettā to them because it's quite likely that they will come back. But if you pursue them with negative thoughts perhaps they will be less likely to come back.

So I think one should watch this and have the confidence that someone who has once made contact with the Dharma will in all probability find his or her way back to the Dharma, even though they do appear to have abandoned it for the time being. I've been quite surprised sometimes, though perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised, the way that some people have eventually found their way back. Sometimes it's not even a question of finding their way back, sometimes they just establish a very slight, a very superficial connection and then you don't see them for years but after a while you see them again and they've become more and more deeply involved. Sometimes people go away as though out of contact for a couple of years but sometimes when they come back they say, well, during the whole of the time that they were, inverted commas, 'out of contact' they themselves felt personally on a mental level very, very much in contact. And having reassessed their position back they are in physical contact again.

So I think one should always put the most positive construction one can upon these sort of temporary disappearances of people, and not make things more difficult for them and for oneself by, as it were, pursuing them with negative thoughts. At the same time, of course, obviously one is going to encourage people to keep in contact as much as they possibly can and discourage them from going out of contact physically but if that is their choice, to be out of contact physically, perhaps just for a while, well one must in a sense, accept that and just surround them with one's positive thoughts, one's thoughts of mettā and if you believe in prayer at all, well just pray to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, that they will eventually find their way back. Because there is hope for all, not only in the long run but even in the short run.

All right. Another question. Same handwriting so it must be the same person.

"What should one do with one's unwanted demons: suppress them; indulge them; educate them; commit suicide and start again?"

Well, what is an unwanted demon? We're not given any precise definition. I think I'll take the phrase just as it stands. They're demons and they're unwanted. So they're not particularly good. They're not particularly bad I suppose really either. Suppress them? Perhaps sometimes. You might have to suppress your demons according to circumstances. I don't think you have the freedom to allow your demons to play. I don't think you have the freedom to let your demons lose regardless of circumstances, especially regardless of the convenience of other people. So I cannot rule suppression out altogether though I think it isn't a good thing to get into a habit of suppression.

Indulge them. Well, that I think depends on exactly what sort of demons they are. I mean there are small demons and there are big demons. There are some that are relatively harmless and there are others that are very, very harmful indeed. I would say that one should indulge them in the case perhaps just of the minor ones to a very limited extent, on very special occasions. (Laughter) But I think one must be very careful. For instance, if you go to a party, I mean a mixed party, well all sorts of demons may break loose and you may be indulging them. That, no doubt, isn't advisable. And educate them. Well, I suppose education of the right sort doesn't do anybody any harm, even demons. And perhaps we should hand them over to professors Kovida and Prasannasiddhi to be properly educated. Because there's hope even for demons.

So yes perhaps the emphasis should be on education. As for committing suicide and starting again and that's just plain silly. (Laughter) I don't think we can even consider that. So suppression where necessary, indulgence in the case of the minor demons, occasionally, under strict supervision, and yes as much education as possible. The other alternative is just ruled out. (Pause)

"How do you maintain your awareness when travelling on the London Underground?" (Laughter)
"What do you think of using a 'Walkman' personal tape recorder in such situations?"

I'm not sure if this is meant as a general question or a personal question. How do you maintain your awareness? I must say I'm so busy thinking about the books that I'm going to buy (Laughter) when I get to the bookshops after leaving the Underground I don't think I have the sort of problem that I think the questioner has in mind. But "How do you maintain your awareness when travelling on the London Underground?" I suppose he's referring to all the people that you see, both male and female, especially the females and perhaps to all the advertisements that you can't help noticing on your way up the escalators. So how do you maintain your awareness? I don't think it's so much a question of maintaining your awareness but the kind of awareness. Sometimes you're only too aware but it's not a very positive or very skilful awareness. I think some people perhaps shouldn't travel on the Underground at all. After all you don't really have to.

Well, supposing you do have to, well, what should you do? Well, perhaps you should take a spiritual friend with you. Perhaps you should engage in uplifting conversation on the way. I don't think it's a question of forcibly averting your gaze from certain advertisements. I don't think that you can do it that way. Otherwise you might find that your head has an uncanny tendency just to turn in that direction entirely of its own accord (Laughter) and quite independently of your will which might give you a sort of rather schizophrenic sort of experience. I think perhaps you have to face the danger sort of boldly. Maybe even do a sort of Asubhabavana practice or just repeat your mantra to yourself.

But I think, if you really find it very, very difficult and all sorts of unskilful do arise in your mind I think perhaps you should consider travelling on the London Underground as rarely as possible. And "What do you think of using a Walkman personal tape recorder?" Is that the sort of thing that they walk about with? I think it's really dreadful. (Laughter)

(End of side one side two)

S: I've seen people riding bicycles in the midst of London traffic and crossing the road wearing these things. I think that's really dreadful. I mean even if there's no accident I think it results in a sort of state of alienation or perhaps even of schizophrenic sort of state. I know it's wonderful what people can adapt to but I can't help wondering whether the adaptation is really a really healthy one. So I think I'd rule this out. I think it might even be better, marginally, just to suffer the noise of the traffic and be aware of it and not resist it. I think in the case of say things like the noise of the traffic I think

you have in a way to accept it, and even make that the object of your mindfulness. I thought this in way at the beginning of the convention, I think it was at the beginning of the mixed convention. When we were all meditating here and our little friends upstairs, the sparrows, they set up a very merry cheerful chirping so one couldn't really feel like wishing them out of the way. But on the other hand some people who are trying to concentrate on their breath or mettā or whatever might have felt irritated by that which would be unfortunate.

But I suggest in such circumstances if especially if you're doing the mindfulness of breathing, you transfer your attention to the sound. Otherwise unless you're capable of really shutting it out, getting into a deep meditation state quickly, you'll just start experiencing tension, irritation, annoyance, and you won't have a good meditation. So if you can't shut out the sound and plunge into a deep meditation, well just transfer your awareness to the sound of the sparrows. It's not like listening to people talking because there's no intelligible meaning. It's just a sound. So make that sound the object of your mindfulness so long as it continues. Don't resist it, don't fight it. In the same way in the midst of traffic, well be aware of the traffic. Don't try to shut it out. It might even be a good thing if you're not very experienced with repeating a mantra, well don't try and repeat a mantra at the same time that you're in the midst of the traffic because again your consciousness will be split, divided very likely between the two. Just concentrate on being as mindful and as aware as you can of everything that is happening. I mean everything around you including the noise of the traffic and that will be an exercise and that will be a practice for you, even though the sound of traffic isn't necessarily a very pleasant one. I think that's all I can say in reply to these two questions. (Pause)

There are two questions here about negativity.

"There are two statements on this subject which appear to be contradictory. One: expressing negativity is self-perpetuating" These seem to be statement of mine culled from different sources. "Expressing negativity is self-perpetuating. The more you do it the more you need to do it. This can apparently be seen in psychological encounter groups and is therefore to be avoided. Two: there are some people who have a fixed quantum of negativity which it is possible to exhaust by channelling it against enemies of the Dharma. Can these two views be reconciled?"

I'm not so sure that they need to be reconciled. I'm not so sure that they're even inconsistent or contradictory. Because they refer to two different kinds or two different types of people one might say. So just let's have a look at each of them in turn.

First of all, "expressing negativity is self-perpetuating, the more you do it the more you need to do it. This can apparently be seen in psychological encounter groups and is therefore to be avoided". It is not that expressing negativity is always self-perpetuating in this way. That is to say the more you do it the more you need to do it. But there are some people of whom this does seem to be true. It's as though there is a person of this type. I've certainly seen, I've certainly met, people of this type. They express negativity very often in the form of anger but the more they express they more they want to express. They can't get to the end of it. They can't exhaust it. It seems to feed upon itself. It is not as though there's a finite quantity of anger waiting to be expressed and which can be exhausted. It's as though there's a bottomless pit. There's a sort of self-perpetuating mechanism as a result of which the amount of anger just goes on increasing and increasing and increasing. This is one particular type of person. I didn't mean to say that this is always what happens when anybody expresses negativity. That invariably the expression of negativity leads to greater negativity and then a greater expression of negativity and so on. This is not the case with all people. But there is a type of person like this. This is all that I was saying.

But then again there are some people who have a fixed quota of negativity which it is possible to

exhaust by channelling it against enemies of the Dharma. Yes, I've also observed that there is this type of person too. For instance, you find this out when there is someone who is apparently angry on account of a certain matter, a certain circumstance. All right you put the matter right but the person remains angry which is clearly in a way irrational. And they proceed to become angry with something else, just as angry with that second thing as they were with the first thing. You put that particular matter right but they transfer the anger so to speak to some other issue, some other matter, so you're left with the impression that they just want to be angry. It's not the particular circumstance, it's not the particular set of conditions - they just have what I call a fixed quantum of anger which is all the time seeking an outlet. I don't remember saying anything about exhausting it by channelling it against enemies of the Dharma, perhaps indeed it is possible to do this.

But you see there are these two kinds of person, not that they're the only types of person in this connection which I've observed. That is to say, the one whose negativity increases with expression and the other whose negativity when it ought logically to come to an end because the circumstances which apparently give rise to it, come to an end, does not come to an end but is merely transferred to some other set of circumstances. There are these two different kinds of persons. Of the two I would say that the first is in a very much worse state or worse condition. It is rather rarer. I think the second type of person is more common. But the fact that there are these two kinds of people and that their anger or whatever form the negativity may take, functions in these two different ways does not mean that there is any inconsistency. They're different and one merely recognises that difference as between these two different types of persons. There would only be an inconsistency if one said that, I mean, in the case of everybody who expressed anger it simply went on increasing, or if one said that in the case of everybody who expressed anger there was a fixed quantum of anger. That is not the case and that is not what I meant to say. I simply meant to say that there at least two kinds of persons whose negativity functions in these two different kinds of ways. (Pause)

Perhaps we'll have something different. Question about a person, someone I knew years ago.

"Would you tell us something about your contact with Dilgo, Dingo, Khyentse Rimpoche and what sort of person you found him to be?"

My contact with him was quite limited. I had contact with him for a short while in Kalimpong and I also met him in Darjeeling just before I returned for the last time so to speak to England, after having decided to work in England indefinitely. So I didn't have a very great deal of contact with him but the contact that I did have with him left me with a very definite impression of him. In a way he wasn't difficult to know. One might even say his personality so far as I could tell was very much on the surface. There was nothing as it were hidden. He was quite open. So let me just think back and try to give you my impressions.

First of all physical impressions. I think he must have been in his early or middle fifties when I met him and the first thing one noticed about him was he was a very tall person. He was from Eastern Tibet, I think from Kam. I think he must have been well, well over six foot. He might have been six foot three or four even. Of course he stooped slightly but even so he looked very, very tall. He was quite thin and at that time he had a wife as tall as himself and a daughter who I think was even taller. I think both wife and daughter are no more but Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche seems to be still going strong though he is now quite old. So that was the first thing one noticed, the immense height of this stooping figure.

The second thing one noticed of course was his age. As I've said he was about fifty, fifty-five and he was, of course, clad in the red robes of the Tibetan, I mustn't say monk, because he was married and the red robes are not monastic robes though monks usually wear them. It's the yellow robe that is on

certain occasions worn over the red robe which is the monastic robe technically speaking. So he wore the red robes of the Trapa(?) or student as it's sometimes translated and he had medium length iron grey hair and he had a very kindly expression. And one always had the impression with Dilgo Rimpoche that he was very fatherly or very grandfatherly. He was very kind in that sort of way. And I went to see him a number of times. He was living at that time at a little cottage attached to or in the compound of the Bhutanese gomba in Kalimpong. The Bhutanese gomba is up, I'm trying to think, eleventh mile between tenth and eleventh mile for those who have been to Kalimpong, just by the side of the road and it's not far from the old Bhutan palace, because you may remember that the Kalimpong area was once part of Bhutan but ceased to be part of Bhutan, became part of British India in the eighteen sixties. So the king of Bhutan had a palace there and attached to the palace or connected to the palace there was a gomba. So that was what we now call the Bhutan or Bhutanese gomba. Not a very big one and in the little cottage next door he lived. It was a very humble little wooden cottage, well a sort of shack really, just two or three rooms.

So I used to go and see him there sometimes and I'd usually find him in a very small room seated cross-legged on a bed at the end, and the room was just wide enough to accommodate the bed, and books, that is to say, Tibetan books would be piled up on other side of him and he'd always be reading. He was a very studious and a very learned lama as in fact was the other Khyentse Rimpoche whom I knew, Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche. And Dilgo Rimpoche was very, very accessible. Some of the Tibetan lamas, especially incarnate lamas, and he was of course an incarnate lama, were not very accessible. One had to approach their servants or their manager and it was quite difficult to get to see them. With Dilgo Rimpoche there was nothing like that. You just sort of walked in. He did have a servant and then of course his wife and his daughter were always somewhere around but there was no difficulty about seeing him. You could virtually just walk straight in. He was always pleased to see you. Always happy to put aside his books, always happy to talk, to answer questions. And always with this very kindly fatherly manner. The thing that I noticed very much about Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche especially in comparison with certain other incarnate lamas whom I'd met and whom I could even name, was that he was completely unostentatious. He stood upon no ceremony as it were. And he didn't arrogate any sort of position to himself. I won't say that he was humble because that would convey the wrong sort of impression, the word has the wrong sort of connotation. But there were absolutely no airs to him. He just, as it were, met one in a perfectly ordinary kindly, friendly sort of way and that was rather unusual I must say among Tibetan incarnate lamas and well, among well-to-do Tibetans generally. Not that he as well-to-do. He was very poor at that time and lived in a very simple very humble sort of way. But this is what mainly struck me, his complete lack of pretentiousness. No sort of ceremony, no sort of pomp surrounded him. He seemed completely oblivious of those sort of things.

And as I've mentioned also I went to see him just before I left the area, after staying there a week prior to returning to England to start the FWBO and I told him what I was going to do and he was very happy and gave his blessing and wished me success. They were so poor that though they wanted to give me a farewell gift they couldn't find anything to give me so in the end his wife, whom I also knew though to a lesser extent than Dilgo Rimpoche, she found an old Kumbar knife that they had in a sheath, and mounted with silver so she gave me this as a parting present from them. But I was struck by their poverty at that time. He didn't seem to bother about material things. He was immersed in his studies and presumably in his meditations too. So she produced this knife which I still have. So that was my overall impression of Dilgo Rimpoche, Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche. And I must say I found him quite outstanding for these various reasons among Tibetan incarnate lamas. (Pause)

All right.

"Please explain the significance of the robes that you currently wear for pujas and for the occasion of conferring ordination? In relation to this question do you have any particular status or position that is recognised by members of the traditional coenobitical Sangha either of Vajrayana, Mahayana or Theravada schools? To what extent do you feel the negatively inclined appraisals of the FWBO and WBO by members of traditional schools of Buddhism could hamper our works to establish effectively the sasana in the modern world?"

So let's see what I can do with this question. So "Please explain the significance of the robes that you currently wear for pujas and for the occasion of conferring ordination?" I'm not sure whether any special significance is to be attached to the word 'currently', because I wear for pujas and for the occasion of conferring ordination the same robes that I've always worn which are the traditional bhikshu robes. The only change or development has been more recently, I've worn under those yellow robes a blue shirt. Well the blue shirt comes from India and it comes of course from our Indian Buddhist friends, are ex-untouchable Indian Buddhist friends. I'm not quite sure how the blue shirt did arise in India. I'm not sure whether it was by accident or design, not even sure whether I thought of it or somebody else thought of it. But blue, dark blue, is the colour which has been adopted by the Ambedkar Buddhist movement generally. Among them, their volunteers as they call them - people who act as ushers at meetings and so on, very often wear a deep blue Gandhi cap and some I think might have worn deep blue shirts. But anyway the question arose of making it clear that our upasakas as they were then, that became Dharmacharis, in India, all sort of belonged together.

So we hit upon the idea, or somebody hit upon the idea and I certainly approved of it even if I didn't originate it, the idea that for the sake of uniformity under the white kesa people should wear a blue shirt. Not a dark blue shirt because that might identify them with members of the political Republican party which is a political party among the ex-untouchables but a lighter blue and everybody liked the idea and it actually has worked very well in India and it's a quite beautiful sight to see on a platform a row of Dharmacharis all wearing their blue shirt with the white kesa over. I think again one of the reasons for the blue shirt was that very often Indians wear white so a white kesa worn over a white shirt just doesn't show. So if you've got a light blue shirt underneath of the sort that they now wear, well the kesa really stands out and the blue shirt makes it all the more noticeable, that all those people in blue shirts and white kesas they belong to the same Order. And furthermore it's been extended because often in India mitras wear the blue shirt but without the kesa. So you can see that there is automatically, that there is a connection between the mitras who are around in their blue shirts and the Order Members who are around in their blue shirts and white kesas.

So at the time of meetings, and don't forget we have thousands of people attending meetings there this is a very effective way of identifying Order Members as well as mitras, especially in the case of those people who want to approach them and ask them questions about the movement and so on. So this has spread because when I'm in India I've been wearing the blue shirt under my kesa. The Anagarikas wear it also so it makes also clear that everybody belongs to the same Order, the same Movement. So since I was wearing it there I saw no reason not to introduce it here. So in that way the blue shirt came to be added to my yellow robes, came to be added to my uniform so to speak. In Tuscany I sometimes wear yellow robes of the same general pattern, but actually different robes, in the sense that they're not the same cloth robes from what I normally wear. They were given to me, in fact, made specially for me by Dhardo Rimpoche on the eve of my departure. So for me they have a special significance. So in recent years I've been using them or wearing them in Tuscany just for ordinations. But in principle they're just ordinary yellow bhikshu robes. The only thing special about them is that they were made in accordance with Tibetan, which I suppose really means Sarvastivada tradition and not in accordance with Theravada tradition and I also was given them as a

special gift by Dhardo Rimpoche. So so much for the question of robes.

"In relation to this question do you have any particular status or position that is recognised by members of the traditional coenobitical Sangha either of Vajrayana, Mahayana or Theravada schools?" Well, I suppose if it comes to a question of status or position from the Theravada point of view, I'm simply a Sthavira because, well that's strictly speaking all there is to be in the in the Theravada. Once you've been a bhikshu for ten years you automatically become a Sthavira. There is a title of course of Maha Sthavira which one usually takes after having been a bhikshu for twenty years but it has no basis in the Vinaya. It's no more than a sort of courtesy title. So my old bhikshu friends with some of whom I'm still in contact in India and elsewhere just regard me as a bhikshu, as a Sthavira if you like, as a Maha Sthavira, who has started his own group or started his own organisation which they're all - those who know me personally - are very happy to see.

And "To what extent do you feel that negatively inclined appraisals of the FWBO or WBO by members of traditional schools of Buddhism could hamper our work to establish effectively the sasana in the modern world?" At present there seems to be very little in the way of negatively inclined appraisals of the FWBO at all. Subhuti of course gave that talk and he referred to the reviews which his book had had. But those were, of course, all reviews written by western Buddhists, more or less loosely attached one might say to traditional schools. As regards the traditional schools of Buddhism in the East most of them aren't aware of the existence of the FWBO or WBO. Certainly not as it were officially. But there are certainly quite a few individuals, including some quite influential Buddhist individuals in the East who have started becoming aware of what the FWBO is doing and who are quite interested, not to say intrigued, and genuinely interested in how we have come to make a success of our movement because they certainly do see it, those who do know about it as a successful movement.

So I don't think that at present, at least we've anything to fear from negatively inclined appraisals of the FWBO or the WBO. That is not to say that even those who have heard about us and are pleased to see what we're doing have any real understanding of the FWBO, much less still of the WBO. I think that even those who are sympathetic towards us have not really grasped what we are about but at least they see the external signs of success. They see numbers. They see communities; they see centres; they see publications and yes, they are impressed by those things.

This brings me to a question I've touched upon lightly before. It hasn't been asked by anybody but it is a question of following the same general area so I'm going to just deal with it. Sometimes one has heard the question "Is the Western Buddhist Order recognised by the Sangha in the East. The traditional Sangha in the East." I've heard this question a number of times. That is to say asked by people within the FWBO, even within the Order. But the question depends on, on quite a big misunderstanding. I mean, first of all, there is not a Sangha in the East at all. There are a number of Sanghas. One might even say there are hundreds of Sanghas all of which are quite separate, quite independent and quite autonomous and not all of which recognise one another. This of course, raises the question also what one means by recognition. Sometimes the questioners aren't clear about this at all. What one means by the Sangha in the East or any Sangha in the East, large or small, recognising the Western Buddhist Order.

Technically and traditionally speaking recognition does not mean that they are aware of your existence. It does not mean that they approve of what you are doing. Technically, especially if we go back to the Theravada or the Theravada schools the Theravada branches of the Sangha, recognition means that one shares what in the Theravada tradition are called Sanghakammas. That is to say, official acts of the Sangha. Let me give you an example. In all the Theravada countries the Sangha is divided into nikayas. There are twelve or fourteen nikayas in the different Theravada countries. Now in a sense these nikayas do not recognise one another. But they are aware of one another's

existence. They're polite to one another when they meet. They may be on friendly terms when they meet. They appear together on the same platform at public meetings but they do not perform their Sanghakammas in unison. For instance, supposing a novice presents himself to be ordained. He is ordained into a particular nikaya. Not into the Sangha in effect. He's ordained into a particular nikaya, or sub-nikaya. And bhikkhus belonging to other nikayas will not be invited, will not be allowed, to participate in their ordination. If they are present, if they were to be present the Sanghakamma would be invalid.

So in other words, the nikayas do not recognise one another in the sense that the presence of a member of another nikaya would invalidate their Sanghakamma, would invalidate their official acts, nullify their official acts. So they all perform these acts separately. The most important acts are, of course, ordination and recitation of the monthly pratimoksa and the reinstatement of monks who have committed certain classes of offenses, mainly these three.

So you see there is not one Sangha in the East, even within the Theravada Sangha as we call it there are many, many nikayas which are mutually exclusive in these matters, and in which in that sense, the sense I've mentioned, do not recognise one another. So if one goes from the Theravada to the other schools, well, there are so many different types of Sangha with so many different criteria of membership. So one would probably find possibly even several hundred Sanghas and that is to say, ecclesiastical bodies within the one Sangha spiritually speaking, that carry on their existence quite independently and do not recognise one another in the sense that I have defined.

So broadly speaking in principle the attitude of all those Sanghas towards the Western Buddhist Order would be the same as their attitude towards one another, especially perhaps in the case of those in the Mahayana countries. If an Order Member was to go to one of those countries, meet members of those Sanghas, yes, the Order Member concerned would be received politely, with friendship and would be helped but he would not be invited to take part in Sanghakammas. Just as if, for instance, a bhikkhu or a Japanese minister of the Shin sect were to come to an FWBO centre or community, we would not invite them to take part, say, in a chapter meeting of the Order. Not because we were being unfriendly or unkind but just because a meeting of a chapter of the Order is simply a meeting of chapter of the Order because a degree of communication is possible between the members of the Western Buddhist Order, a type of communication which is not possible with people belonging to other Sanghas or groups within those Sanghas.

So their attitude towards us would be no different in principle to their attitude towards one another. But it must be emphasised, of course, that usually on a personal level outside the question of official acts of the Sangha, relations are more often than not perfectly friendly and cordial and even co-operative. So the very question of whether the Western Buddhist Order is recognised by the Sangha in the East is a question based on an entirely false presumption.

So I'm quite sure that when the Western Buddhist Order is sufficiently strong in numbers and there is a sufficient number of centres and communities and so on, and is sufficiently well-known, it will be recognised in the sense that every other Buddhist community, Buddhist Sangha, or branch of the Sangha, in the world is recognised, and it might be even more highly regarded than some of them are, at present. Anyway that is just by the way. (Pause)

All right. Perhaps we're getting into a few rather complicated questions. Perhaps I'll take just one or two of them.

"I can understand how beings are born in the animal world but how are they born in the human world given the vicious nature of samsara the odds seem in favour of going down rather than up?"

Well, that's quite true. The odds seem to be in favour of going down rather than up but one has been born as a human being. One has gone up. At least so far as the present birth, the present life is concerned. So the important thing is that you make the very best possible use of the opportunity that you've got. You may not have it again if you don't take advantage of the opportunity that you have now. So don't waste it, don't throw it away. Make the best possible use of it.

Then, quite, a different question,

"To use Milarepa's terminology could we correlate the arising of awareness, prana etc in the central channel with the first dhyana?"

I think this is quite difficult. The arising of awareness, prana etc, in the central channel in Milarepa's terminology and perhaps Vajrayana terminology generally, speaks, so to speak, the language of energy. And I think that is rather a different language than the language of the dhyanas. I think one is dealing with a rather different dimension or different aspect of spiritual life. So I doubt very much whether one could have a straightforward correlation of that arising with the first dhyana. (Pause)

I think I'm going to have to be a little selective now because we've still quite a lot of questions and not very much time. (Pause)

This is a more specifically dharmic question.

"In the Mahasaccaka Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya the Buddha having replied to Agivesana's offensive and presumptuous speech says to Agivesana, 'Now I'm aware that when I'm teaching karma to companies consisting of many hundreds each person thinks thus about me. 'The recluse Gautama is teaching karma especially for me.' But this should not be understood thus for when a tathagata is teaching dharma to others it is for the sake of general instruction and I, at the close of such a talk, stay calm, remain one pointed and concentrate my mind subjectively in that first characteristic of concentration, samadhinimita in which I ever constantly abide'." That's the quotation. Then, "Two questions arise from this paragraph. Firstly concerning the Buddha's statement about a tathagata teaching the Dharma for general instruction as opposed to especially for me, how does this apply to us, listening to and passing on your teachings. Secondly, the Buddha says that he 'ever constantly abides in the first characteristic of meditation.' This first characteristic of meditation is said to be samadhinimita which I think refers to awareness of and realisation of impermanence. Does the Buddha set aside this samadhinimita while he teaches Dharma returning to it when he finishes teaching? Do you have any comment to make on the Buddha's singling out this samadhi nimita as the state in which he ever constantly abides?"

So let's look at this samadhinimita which is said to be the first characteristic of concentration. Actually the samadhinimita or first characteristic of concentration is not singular but plural. The samadhinimita is in fact the four satipatthanas. That is to say, mindfulness or awareness of the body, of feelings, of thoughts and of Dhammas which is usually understood as ideas and especially those ideas, those concepts, which reflect reality which reflect the truth.

So let's go back to the quotation and look at it in that light. 'Now I'm aware that when I'm teaching Dharma to companies consisting of many hundreds each person thinks thus about me. The recluse Gautama is teaching Dharma especially for me but this should not be understood thus. For when a tathagata is teaching Dharma to others it is for the sake of general instruction and I, at the close of such a talk, steady calm, make one pointed and concentrates my mind subjectively in that first characteristic of concentration in which I ever constantly dwell, abide', in other words the four foundations of mindfulness.

(End of tape three)

(Tape four side one)

S: So the Buddha seems to be making the point that when he stops teaching, he returns to base as it were and he simply sits there being mindful of his body, being mindful of his feelings, being mindful of his thoughts and being mindful of Dhammas. This of course in turn suggests that while he was actually teaching Dharma he was not practising or abiding in the four satipatthanas. This would seem to be the meaning but one can't really believe that the Buddha, as it were, when he was teaching Dharma abandoned the, you know, the four foundations of mindfulness. In any case, he says, in 'which I ever constantly abide' so does that constantly include the time when he is actually teaching the Dharma. Perhaps one could say that, you know, that the four foundations of mindfulness are always there as a sort of accompaniment to the Buddha when he is teaching. He doesn't abandon them altogether but when he's teaching presumably the people whom he's teaching and what he's teaching them, the act of teaching comes in a manner of speaking to the forefront of his consciousness. It's rather like the bass line in music. You've got the melody, you've got the rest of the music going on but then there might be a pause in the music and you just hear the bass line. But the bass line is there all the time. Perhaps it's the harpsichord continuo or something like that.

So it would seem that we're to think of the Buddha as really practising the four foundations of mindfulness all of the time but when he's actually teaching they are so to speak overshadowed by the fact that he's teaching. Teaching comes to the forefront of his consciousness but as soon as he stops teaching well, then he's just practising the four foundations of mindfulness and doing just that. I think this is how we must understand this passage.

Well then two questions arise from this paragraph. Firstly concerning the Buddha's statement about the tathagata "Teaching the Dharma for general instruction as opposed to especially for me. How does this apply to us listening to and passing on your teachings?" Well, what is the Buddha actually saying first of all. He's saying that "The recluse Gautama is teaching Dharma especially for me but this should not be understood thus". I think what is not to be understood is that the Buddha is teaching Dharma especially for someone in the sense of only for that person. And I think whether it is said that the Buddha is teaching Dharma for the sake of general instruction it doesn't mean, you know, that the teaching does not apply to people individually. What it means is it does not apply to any individual who's present, individually, to the exclusion of its applying to other individuals. In some Mahayana sutras this is brought out quite specifically. It is said that the Buddha teaches or if you like preaches and everybody understands the Buddha in his or her own way. Perhaps even animals and birds. Everybody benefits to some extent. It's like the rain which descends on all the different flowers and trees and shrubs and each grows according to its own nature. So when the Buddha teaches and when there are a lot of people present even though a particular person thinks that the Buddha is speaking just to him in the sense of only to him, that is not the case. The Buddha is speaking generally in the sense of speaking to everybody but everybody will feel that the Buddha is speaking just to him. I mean, people have had that experience, I know, listening to some of my talks that sometimes what I've said has been so as it were apposite, so related to their specific individual case that they think that, well Bhante must have heard about this in some way and is actually addressing his remarks to me. I might perhaps not have met that person, or seen that person, or even been aware of that person's existence. That has happened in the past, especially when I was giving my lectures in London.

But, yes, I'm speaking generally. But when one speaks generally in so to speak a concrete sort of way what one says generally can be applied by an individual to himself, in fact a number of

individuals to themselves. This even ties up with great works of literature. Sometimes you read something and you feel as though, well just Shakespeare wrote that just for me, or Nietzsche wrote that just for me. It comes home to your bosom as Bacon says, so forcibly, but actually it was written generally, not written sort of generally in the sense of being written in the air or in a highly abstract manner, but written in such an imaginative manner and with so many facets of meaning, so many implications, such great suggestiveness that everybody can take something from it and feel that, well yes this applies to me. So he or she is quite right in thinking and feeling this, but not right if he or she thinks that this was meant specially for me, in the sense of only for me. Do you see the difference? (Pause) Yes I think that's enough perhaps on that, you know, topic.

All right.

"Sometimes it happens that for whatever reasons a rift occurs between two Order Members to the extent that it is virtually impossible for them to sort it out on a personal level. It can even become so extreme that it spills over and affects an Order Member's view of other Order Members generally. This would seem to make the difficulty the concern of the whole Order. Was there any formal procedure in the early Sangha for a public acknowledgement of matters of this nature and their resolution on a transpersonal level for the well-being of both the Order and the individuals concerned. If appropriate could you suggest any procedures we could adopt in the Western Buddhist Order?"

I can't remember much in the way of personal conflicts in the early monastic order in India as between two people, two bhikkhus, but there are records, there are accounts of several conflicts between groups or parties if you like within the Sangha and there were procedures for dealing with those. One for instance was that each side appointed say two arbitrators and those who were arbitrators settled the matter, or the Sangha as a whole - that is all those disagreeing agreed to refer the matter to three or four people whom all trusted and to abide by their decision. There were such procedures and provisions. But in the case of such rifts between two Order members in the Western Buddhist Order. Well, first of all such rifts are indeed a very serious matter and they do affect the whole Order, they do have an effect on the whole Order. If the two Order Members concerned can sort things out themselves or if they are seen to be making an effort and perhaps succeeding to some extent, well perhaps it's best if they are left alone to do that because sometimes third parties intervening can even do more harm than good.

But if it does seem that the rift continues and is in fact becoming worse, because if it continues and nothing is done about it, it does become worse in a sense that it at least becomes solidified and hardened and a sort of permanent part of the Order scene or the chapter scene and that isn't a good thing. So I think in such cases other Order Members generally will have to intervene, have to take some action but they must clearly be very careful how they do that and act very, very responsibly and diplomatically and positively, consulting perhaps first of all among themselves and trying to find out what actually has gone wrong, what is the point at issue, what has led to the split, and then perhaps one or two of them can talk to the two Order Members individually and try to talk them round, try to talk them into a more sensible frame of mind.

I know that there's one procedure which has been resorted to by some Order Members - I think even Order Members and mitras - and that is what is known as the facilitator. I'm not quite sure how this works. It seems to work though quite well. But apparently the facilitator is a person who acts almost as a sort of go-between in the case of two people between whom there's a rift and his or her main responsibility it seems is to make sure that each party has understood what the other has said because sometimes there are misunderstandings and therefore it is the task of the facilitator to find out what exactly each person is trying to say to the other and put it across in the clearest way so that there is

no misunderstanding, because sometimes misunderstandings can occur just due to verbal confusions or something of that sort. So it does seem that the appointment of a facilitator and perhaps you can consult those Order Members who have experience of this kind of thing, the appointment of a facilitator who is accepted by both Order Members who are party to the rift can be very helpful.

But it certainly is a sad thing that there should be rifts between two or even more Order Members at all. Such things in a way shouldn't really be possible and if they do occur and if the persons immediately concerned don't seem to be doing anything about resolving the situation, well, other Order Members must do something, especially of course, the chapter to which both those two Order Members belong, whether it's the same chapter or two different chapters. I am aware that there are still a few, at least, minor rifts between different Order Members and that is indeed a sad state of affairs and I think such rifts must be cleared up as soon as we possibly can because they contribute to the weakening of the whole Order. In fact they are negating everything that the Order stands for. (Pause)

All right I think we'll have to begin to draw to an end. It looks as though that question about co-ops isn't going to get answered. But anyway there's two questions now which deal more or less with the same issue. I'll take them together and perhaps I'll pass on to one or two general points I want make myself, and I think then we'll have to conclude.

"Subhuti spoke in his recent talk in terms of the FWBO as being the sole vanguard of Western Buddhism to the best of his knowledge. How valid do you think this is?" Do you not think that other Buddhist groups such as the Los Angeles Zen Centre under Mayezumi(?) roshi, the Providence Zen Centre under Soinsanim(?) and the Aryamaitreya Mandala founded by Lama Govinda are also making a distinctive contribution to the development of Western Buddhism? In what way does the contribution of the FWBO stand apart from and above theirs?"

Then the other person asks:

"In his talk on the combined Order convention, 'An Old Net for New Monsters', Subhuti made the following statement: 'From my own acquaintance with the western Buddhist scene I do consider that the FWBO is the only authentic vanguard of western Buddhism'. He went on to define western Buddhism as: 'The communication of the principles of Dharma in a manner which enables people in the West today to respond to them and to put them into practice.' His succeeding remarks imply that he is comparing the FWBO with Buddhist groups in the West and not presumably with individual Buddhists. To what extent does Subhuti's statement accord with your own impression of other Buddhist groups? Have all except the FWBO failed to communicate the principles of Dharma effectively? I'd be especially interested to hear your views on the work and publications of groups associated with Chogyam Trungpa and of the Aryamaitreya Mandala founded by Lama Govinda. Should we be cautious and restrained when tempted to assert the pre-eminence of the FWBO in public forums?"

There's quite a lot there and clearly I can't deal with the issue as perhaps as thoroughly as it should be dealt with but perhaps I can at least make a few remarks. To deal with the questioner properly one would really need a paper such as Subhuti did give on the mixed convention dealing with these very issues. In fact I even suggested to Subhuti that he might think in terms of putting such a paper together. We might even have it on some future convention. But perhaps I should also make it clear that in some respects the questions of this sort are not only very difficult but also very delicate because in a way people are inviting me, people who ask such questions, are inviting me to say what I really think. (Laughter) And one has to remember, for instance, we're being tape-recorded and there is always the possibility of tapes getting into the hands of the wrong people. And one must

remember that truth can sometimes be legally speaking libellous. And one might find that if the tapes of a session of this sort got into the hands of, let us say, of the wrong people, and were found to contain libellous matter, then it could be that the FWBO and myself in particular were involved in court proceedings.

So I hope that people fully realise the nature and significance of the questions that they ask. Not only questions of this sort but all questions and I hope that everybody ponders their questions and their possible repercussions or repercussions of the answers before they actually put the questions forward.

Also there is another difficulty because in a way people are inviting me to be critical and some people might think that to mean negative about other Buddhist groups and I must say, frankly, I don't like to be critical or negative about Buddhist groups in public or even in front of the Order regardless of what I might think about them and I must say in this connection that I know far more about Buddhist groups in the west, even Buddhist groups in America than anybody else here. There are a lot of things I know which I keep to myself. Sometimes because I'm quite ashamed and disgusted on behalf of Buddhism so to speak that such things could be done in the name of Buddhism. There's a lot that I'm not happy to know and I think a lot that you wouldn't be happy to know either, and I think it's probably better that I don't tell you some of things that I know to be true about some of the groups about which I have heard. These things are usually known to people in the Order office because we do get information from various sources. Especially we get people from different groups coming to see us, even groups in America and telling us what their own experience has been and what their own observations have been. So this is certainly not a light matter. But I'm not going to, I'm afraid, even on this occasion tell you everything that I think and everything that I know.

But I'll tell you just a little bit where I can be perhaps less negative or a bit less critical, though still a little bit critical. Yes, I think, it's important to begin with to remind ourselves of what Subhuti actually said, how he defined western Buddhism. "The communication of the principles of Dharma in a manner which enables people in the West today to respond to them and put them into practice." So there were two things which are important here. One it is the principles of the Dharma that are communicated, not something that is not Dharma and I certainly think that a lot of Buddhist groups in the West do not succeed in communicating Dharma. They may communicate something but it is not always Dharma, or not always purely Dharma or not always unadulterated Dharma and as regards communicating in a manner that enables people in the west today to respond to them and put them into practice, again, it is the principle of the Dharma, or principles of the Dharma that must be responded to and put into practice. There are lots of Buddhist groups that are doing a lot of things, sometimes very successfully and on a large scale, but are they responding to and putting into practice the principles of the Dharma. They may be making money, they may be becoming very famous but are they responding to and putting into practice the principles of the Dharma. That is the sort of question that we should be asking.

So all right let's go a little bit more into things. Let me deal with the shorter of the two questions first. "Subhuti spoke in his recent talk in terms of the FWBO as being the sole vanguard of Western Buddhism". Well, when one is talking about western Buddhism one is talking about western Buddhism. I think Subhuti also made it clear he didn't mean by Western Buddhism, Buddhism in the west. There's a certain amount of Buddhism in the west which is quite authentic and genuine or rather it's not Buddhism so much in the west as this or that tradition of Eastern Buddhism in the west transplanted to the west. We're not talking about that. The questions are not about that. We're talking about western Buddhism and if you look at the general Buddhist scene in the west one finds not Buddhist groups, one finds in effect Theravada groups, Zen groups, Tibetan groups, not Buddhist groups, and the FWBO on the other hand purports to be or tries to be just Buddhist. We don't

identify ourselves exclusively with any particular Buddhist tradition. We're not opposed to any particular Buddhist tradition. We try to learn and to benefit from all Buddhist traditions of the past, all eastern Buddhist traditions to the greatest possible extent that we can, and no doubt that will continue and we shall draw from them more and more as the years go by and try to integrate it all on the basis of our own personal experience, our collective experience so to speak, into a beautiful whole.

But we do not identify ourselves exclusively with any one eastern tradition whereas almost all Buddhist groups and movements in the west do. So they're not western Buddhism, even to begin with, what to speak of the vanguard of western Buddhism. So I certainly think Subhuti's point is valid. "Do you not think that other Buddhist groups such as the Los Angeles Zen Centre under Mayezumi(?) roshi ..." Well, I don't know very much about the Los Angeles Zen Centre but I believe that it's collapsed - that's what I heard very recently. Someone came from there recently to see me, a disciple of Mayezumi(?) roshi, and I'm sorry to say that he told me that Mayezumi(?) roshi was an alcoholic and obviously had a very serious problem in this connection. So the Los Angeles Zen Centre has folded up. And it does seem that alcoholism is a serious problem in Zen Buddhist circles, Zen groups in the United States and even in Japan itself.

This particular young monk told me that there were two serious problems bedeviling the whole Buddhist movement, or so-called Buddhist movement in America. One problem was alcoholism, including alcoholism among teachers and leaders and the other sexual promiscuity including recently some cases of adultery, a case of a well-known roshi committing adultery with the wives of his students and the husband apparently, one of them, tried to commit suicide as a result of this. There's been a very big upset and upheaval in this particular Zen group. The roshi has left, he's gathered a few people around him and the greater part of the movement, the greater part of the Centre carrying on without him and not quite sure what to do.

Another big problem as far as I can see apart from the, you know, the alcoholism, which I believe doesn't characterise the FWBO, nor the sexual promiscuity which characterises the FWBO only to a limited extent (Laughter) is authoritarianism. From what I've seen and heard and read about traditional Buddhist groups whether Zen or Tibetan especially in the States - much less so in this country - they are very highly authoritarian and I think that in the Western Buddhist Order we have come to the conclusion that authoritarianism is a form of operating in accordance with the power mode, not in accordance with the love mode as we've come to see it and any individual, any so-called guru or lama or organisation which deliberately, as it would seem, operates in an authoritarian and a highly authoritarian manner cannot really be regarded as genuinely Buddhist. I think that one has to say this, and the authoritarianism in some Buddhist groups in the States is carried to an extreme.

One hears, one reads in their own publications, of one particular well-known guru, I won't mention any names, has a bodyguard of twelve people. So what has happened? I mean, has he made so many enemies that he requires the protection of a bodyguard of twelve people or does he think that he is so important that he requires a bodyguard or that it's some kind of sign of prestige that he requires a bodyguard of twelve people. This is not a rumour or something we've merely heard. The fact that he has twelve bodyguards is actually published in their literature and they seem to be rather proud of this. Speaking personally, I mean, I can go anywhere in Great Britain, anywhere in London, on my own as I frequently do looking for books. [Laughter] I don't need any bodyguard. I don't need anybody with me. I never had a bodyguard in India. I'm sure that if I went to the States I wouldn't require a bodyguard. The Buddha once was in some danger of his life and his disciples provided him with a bodyguard. I think you know the story. And when the Buddha got up in the night to find the bhikkhus patrolling around he sent them away. He said the tathagata needs no bodyguard and these

lamas and these gurus are supposed to be highly developed people spiritually. I mean do they need bodyguards? So one must ask these questions quite seriously and personally I can't take seriously from a spiritual point of view anyone even though he may be a great roshi, guru, lama and so on who has to keep a bodyguard of twelve people on duty all the time, you know, besides various other odds and ends (Laughter).

I must say Providence Zen Centre I don't know anything about so I can't say. Aryamaitreya Mandala. Well of course obviously by asking this question someone put me in a quite difficult position. I don't know whether that was their intention. I hope not because I have to speak the truth and also sometimes it's a quite dangerous thing to ask me a question because I will only speak the truth, at least to the Order. Everybody knows that Lama Govinda was a very good friend of mine. Everybody knows that I have a very warm and very positive feeling towards Lama Govinda and Lama Govinda of course if the founder of the Aryamaitreya Mandala. So even if there was to be any criticism to be made of the Aryamaitreya Mandala I certainly wouldn't be happy to make it out of my loyalty to Lama Govinda, out of my feelings of friendship to Lama Govinda but nevertheless I have been asked. By implication I've been asked to make a criticism. So I'm afraid I do have to make a criticism, but I'm going to make it as gently as I can out of my regard for Lama Govinda, and out of respect even for my own feelings about Lama Govinda because I certainly don't enjoy having to make any criticism, even the slightest about a movement started by Lama Govinda.

But I've been asked so, all right, I'll make just a few comments. I think that first of all in comparison with the FWBO, in comparison with the Western Buddhist Order the Aryamaitreya Mandala is quite small. In fact I think I can say it's very small. And the main point of agreement between us and the main things that I'm glad about is that the Aryamaitreya Mandala is an Order. I've always considered that to be a very important thing and I've always been glad that the Aryamaitreya Mandala is in fact an Order and not just an organisation or a Buddhist society. So we do have that in common. But I must say in all honesty that I recently came to understand, though I've yet to check this, that members of the Aryamaitreya Mandala are permitted to belong to Christian churches. Members of the Western Buddhist Order are not, I won't say permitted to be members of churches, well, they can be members of churches if they wish, but not at the same time as being a member of the Western Buddhist Order because Going for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is incompatible with church membership. I've yet to go into this but I do understand, I've recently come to understand, that in the Aryamaitreya Mandala people are permitted to be members of churches and that some in fact are members of churches. If this was to be the case, and I must emphasise that I haven't yet checked this, I would be very sorry indeed because I would consider it a diminution from, or detraction from, the fact that they were a Buddhist order. But I don't know, I hope it isn't true.

Then of course, the Aryamaitreya Mandala does not have any organisation like the FWBO through which it functions. It doesn't have any communities. It doesn't have any co-ops. I don't think it even has any centre. I don't think it has any public activities of the kind that we have which means that it is not really a very effective movement. I gather that the majority of the people are elderly rather than young and some of them we are in good, friendly contact with but almost all of them I believe have full time jobs and also have families. This cannot but limit their effectiveness at the very least. And I think that as a matter of recorded fact, the Aryamaitreya Mandala in Germany, at least, though established some time before the Western Buddhist Order has not succeeded in doing nearly as much. Nevertheless we do have our friendly feelings towards them. I've personally always kept in contact with the present Head of the Order, Advayavajra, whom of course I knew in India as well as his son who is also a member of the Order. We co-operate with them and have contact with them as much as we can, as much as circumstances permit, but I cannot help feeling that they do have very definite limitations as compared with the Western Buddhist Order, the FWBO.

All right let's go onto the other questions and see if there's anything that hasn't been covered. (Pause)

Yes, there was something that I was going to mention. One particular Buddhist group, I'll have to mention names because it's a matter of record. The matter I'm going to talk about has actually appeared, been published in their own newspaper and this is the newspaper put out by Trungpa's organisation. We get this. The Order office gets this regularly and it's interesting reading and we're quite glad to get it but we are very sorry to see a particular article in the most recent issue. This is an article by the editor, Rick Fields, and Rick Fields is the author of 'How the Swans came to the Lake', an account of the development of Buddhism in the United States. It's quite a good book, it's well written and it's very readable, but I'm afraid he leaves out quite a lot. He leaves out anything more critical. So to that extent it isn't a completely accurate or honest account but nonetheless it's readable. He leaves out quite a lot of things that I know about and have known about for years. He leaves out certain people involved in the American scene who are very prominently involved, presumably left them out because there wasn't really anything very positive one could say about them. But nonetheless they were part of the total scene and perhaps shouldn't have been left out. But anyway Rick Fields has written an article, it's practically a full page article on sake, and apparently Rick Fields is in favour of not only western Buddhists drinking sake, but manufacturing it and he seems to be in favour of Buddhist co-ops being established for the production of saki and quotes from someone involved in the sake production movement, apparently a Buddhist, who is very enthusiastic about Buddhists producing sake and selling sake as a means of right livelihood much as the Benedictines sold their famous vintage in the Middle Ages and perhaps right down to the present time.

So here one has a deliberate advocacy of the breaking of the fifth of the five precepts and a presentation of that, that the breaking of that precept on a grand scale as a form of right livelihood. Well, can one really take that person or the movement that he represents if that movement agrees with that point of view, at all seriously. If a particular individual Buddhist takes the odd drop of wine, as it were, unofficially, that's a quite different matter, but if a Buddhist magazine, a Buddhist publication, a Buddhist newspaper, publishes articles which maintain that the drinking of sake is part of the Buddhist way of life and that the production of sake is a suitable activity for a Buddhist co-op, is a form of right livelihood, then I think they cannot be taken fully seriously. They cannot be regarded as fully Buddhist. One doesn't want to be puritanical, and I think that the FWBO is the least puritanical perhaps of Buddhist movements in the west, but one must have very serious misgivings about an organisation which can publish in its official journal and apparently give its support to a product of that kind. The same page of course carries advertisements for sake and so on and so forth.

So what can one really think? I mean, this is not a question of tolerance or intolerance, it's a question of recognising what are the principles of the Dharma and what are not. This is a comparatively mild example of this kind of thing unfortunately but I give it because it's well documented. Anybody who wishes can read the article. So this just occurred to me. This is the sort of thing that we're up against. (Pause)

"As to what extent does Subhuti's statement accord with your impression of other Buddhist groups?" Well, it fully accords with my impression of other Buddhist groups on the whole. "Have all except the FWBO failed to communicate the principles of Dharma effectively?" On the whole I think we have to say yes. Not that certain individuals haven't succeeded in communicating some of the principles of the Dharma, but I don't think anybody has succeeded in setting up an effective order or organisation like the FWBO to do so in a sort of systematic manner, to a larger number of people. "I would be specially interested to hear your views on the work and publications of groups associated with Chogyam Trungpa." Well, I've touched a little upon that and the Aryamaitreya Mandala and I've touched upon that.

Perhaps I should mention one or two groups that I do feel quite positively towards and of which I feel, at least well in certain respects we can wholeheartedly approve. I'm not quite sure what their official title is but one is the group which is responsible for 'Dharma' publishing. It is Tarthang Tulku's group and I must say that it certainly in the field of publications they've done extremely well and I must say also that I get a very good and positive impression from their publications and in a way from the group itself so far as I've heard about them or met people who've had contact with them. They are of course limited just to Tibetan Buddhism so I wouldn't regard them as being part of the "vanguard of Buddhism", western Buddhism or Buddhism in the west but they do represent the Tibetan tradition on which we also draw, by which we also are inspired in an authentic and genuine manner. So they are one of the groups that I personally have quite a lot of respect for.

And then there's another group, I'm not quite sure what they call themselves. This is a Zen group originating in Korea. They are located in Ann Arbor in Michigan USA and I believe in Toronto. We get a magazine of theirs called 'Spring Wind' and I personally think that this is the best Buddhist magazine in English. It's pervaded by a very, very positive spirit. It is, yes, it is Zen, there is a limitation there, but I think it's Zen of a very broad kind and a very positive kind, and very genuine and human kind, and their Zen doesn't seem at all like the Japanese Zen that one usually encounters. Their teacher who is a Korean has had contact with Manjuvajra and Manjuvajra with him. He has recently visited Manjuvajra, he's on a little tour and my impressions about them, though limited in the sense that they are just a Zen group so far have been wholly positive. So we're quite happy to have contact with them.

So broadly speaking, we have positive contact and friendly contact with Tarthang Tulku's group, with this particular Zen group and also with the Aryamaitreya Mandala. They do as I explained have their limitations but within those limitations they are in many ways very positive and we're very happy to have contact with them, because it's certainly isn't a happy state of affairs if we are in fact the only authentic vanguard of western Buddhism. Because then a much, much more heavy responsibility devolves upon us. Well, I'm afraid I have to accept, I have to admit that that does rather seem to be the case. If we ever do discover Buddhist groups in other parts of the west which are similar to us, which accept the whole Buddhist tradition, who make the Going for Refuge central in their lives, which are also trying to transform society as well as to transform self, we'll be very happy. In many cases the adaptation that some groups, Tibetan and Zen groups have achieved in America for instance, have been adaptations to some of the worst aspects of modern American life. We can't regard that as the sort of adaptation of which we are thinking. We're not thinking of adaptation to the existing state of affairs. We're thinking in terms of adaptation to basic western psychology and the best of western culture. We're not thinking in terms of making concessions to the affluent society. But that is what it usually seems to amount to in the case of many of these groups. We're not just interested in that. So perhaps I need not say any more. It is a quite difficult and ticklish sort of topic to talk about. I could have said much more but I think this should be enough.

Oh dear, we've gone over time. I still have one or two more points of my own to make. I'll make them as briefly as I can with apologies to those people whose questions have not this time been answered.

(End of side one side two)

The first general point I want to make is that though I do believe quite firmly that the FWBO is the sole vanguard of Western Buddhism I don't think that the FWBO is perfect. Perhaps the blueprint is if not perfect, very nearly perfect, but that blueprint is far from having been fulfilled. There are many imperfections and the imperfections of course are mainly in the field of implementation.

Mainly in the field of people actually carrying out the blueprint, acting in accordance with the blueprint. Just a few minutes ago I touched upon this question of splits, rifts between individual Order Members, so clearly if rifts are even possible then clearly all is not well. The FWBO, well the Order, let us say is not perfect. We still have a lot more to do, a lot of work both on ourselves as well on society, to do before we even begin remotely to approach perfection. And the fact that rifts are possible suggests that the Order is even now not as united as it might be, not as united as it should be and this is a very, very important matter that we really have to give a very serious attention to. It is very regrettable that there is not full, free open communication even yet between all members of the Order. There are obstacles, misunderstandings, rifts even, splits here and there and we have to give very serious attention because there's absolutely no reason, no excuse for these things at all.

And this brings me to another related point and that is this question of trust. Perhaps I don't need to say very much about it because it was discussed quite exhaustively at a recent chairmen's meeting or series of meetings - that discussion was taped and I hope people will be able to listen to it. But there must be a deepening trust among Order Members, both old and new, because without that trust, that there won't be a deepened genuine unity of the whole Order and in this connection I'd like to remind people of the purpose, or one of the purposes of our structure, especially the structure of our meetings because as everybody knows there are chapter meetings which take place every week and then there are regional Order meetings which take place, I believe at present every other month and national Order meetings, that is to say, of men and women individually, which take place also every other month, alternate months, and of course our conventions which we try to hold every two years. So I think it's important to understand why we have this sort of structure. The structure, or one of the reasons why we have this sort of structure is to help us realise our connection, our identity with the greater Order. You may have a very successful chapter. You may be in close and deep communication with everybody else in your chapter. That's a very good start, an excellent start but it isn't enough. You must broaden your vision so that's why we have the regional Order meetings. That's why we have the national Order meetings.

So it is very important that when you are attending a regional Order meeting you make a special effort to get to know people from other chapters and when you are on a national Order weekend you make a special effort to get to know people from other regions. That is an opportunity. I mention this because in the current Shabda there's a reporting in - I don't understand fully what happened - but it seems to be clear that a certain regional Order weekend at least some people from a particular chapter stuck together and seemed, at least according to this reporting in, to want to have very little to do with people from other chapters. So this is not the purpose of regional Order weekends. It's not an opportunity of getting together just with your chapter, your fellow chapter members. It's an opportunity to get to know other members of the Order, and people who belong to other chapters within that particular region. So I think that people must bear that in mind.

So similarly when you come on a national Order weekend don't spend all of your time with people from your own chapter, or even your own region. Try to reach out to people from other regions, even from other countries, or especially from other countries. Get to know at least to some extent, as many Order members as you can and broaden your vision in that way.

And this brings me to another point and that is about writing up your reporting in. I'm afraid once again opening the current Shabda I had a disappointment because it was a very thin issue and quite a lot of people who were present at regional and national Order weekends, hadn't written up their reporting in and sent it in in time. Perhaps they did write it up but they didn't send it in time and in the case of one particular region I counted twenty one people present for the weekend but there were only three reportings in from that whole region published in Shabda. So I must say I was very, very disappointed, deeply disappointed, and I'm sure that many other people were, because remember that

those reportings-in as reported in Shabda are certainly my main source of regular information about Order Members. Not all Order Members write, perhaps it's not possible to keep up correspondence though it's desirable. I can't see all Order Members regularly. They can't see me regularly perhaps, especially those who live in distant countries so it is all the more important that everybody, not only attends the Order meetings, in addition to the weekly chapter meetings, but attends the regional Order meetings, and the national Order weekends. Not only attends them, not only reports in but writes up their reporting in or has it written up for them and sends it in.

Otherwise sometimes for months and months together I have no information about what a particular Order Member is doing and how they are getting on. This is my main source of information and I'm sure it's the main source of information for many Order Members, main source of information about what fellow Order Members are doing. So if in a way you neglect to do this, you don't report in or you don't report in properly or you don't write it up and send it in to Shabda, in a way you're not caring to keep up your communication with other Order Members especially those you don't normally meet in the flesh, especially those who live in other countries. And one must especially remember this in the case of Order Members in England where there's the greater number of Order Members. Sometimes it's very difficult for Order Members in England to understand how isolated Order Members are, or how isolated Order Members feel who are living in countries where there are very, very few Order Members. It's very, very difficult sometimes for Order Members in England to understand how much those comparatively more isolated Order Members appreciate being able to read reportings-in from all over world, and especially from England where the greatest number of reportings-in should come from.

So please remember your fellow Order Members. Your fellow Order Members want to hear from you. They want to know about you. So if you don't, you know, write up your reporting-in and send it in to Shabda you're neglecting them. It's almost like going on an Order occasion and ignoring everybody who is present, and not speaking to them. Cutting them, as it were, or sending them to Coventry. It's almost like that because spiritually speaking you're all together. On the spiritual plane you're all together. So if you don't acknowledge that by communicating overtly you are in effect ignoring your fellow Order Members. So not to write up your reporting in and send it in to Shabda is really to ignore and neglect your fellow Order Members and not care, in a way, about your communication with them. Not care that they should know about you and presumably not care that you should know about them.

So I really do urge all Order Members to give this their very serious consideration, very serious attention because it's really quite shameful when we have so many Order Members up and down the country, or in a way, all over the world present and reporting in at Order meetings of one kind or another but nothing sent in, nothing, you know, written up for Shabda and sent in, which fellow Order Members can read. So for me personally it's very, very disappointing. So would people please remember these things. The importance of overcoming any rifts that there may be in the Order. The importance of developing trust in fellow Order Members and the importance of writing up and sending in, I was almost going to say every month, without fail your reporting in to Shabda in good time for publication.

Perhaps this, to end on a more positive note is the proper place for me just to express, you know, a word of appreciation for Virananda bringing out Shabda, editing it without editing it, of course, every month and having it out so punctually, and also for the people up in Glasgow who print it and who are responsible for distribution. It's a very, very great service to the whole Order that they're all doing between them producing Shabda for our benefit. But Shabda will be fully for our benefit only if we do send in our reportings in.

(End tape four tape five - concluding remarks after Abhaya's talk on the history of Shabda)

S: the events and the writings and the reporting in of 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81. I think that we can enjoy them even more. I think one day, I'd love to see a volume of extracts from Shabda real prize items. Real plums. (Laughter) From Shabda, I mean, perhaps, who knows, Abhaya may be the Jack Horner who puts his thumbs into the Shabda pie and produces all these plums (Laughter) for our benefit. The pocket Shabda one might say, though strictly of course for Order Members only. (Laughter) I think we'll have to limit its circulation in that way, at least for the next hundred years, let us say. So altogether I personally very much enjoyed Abhaya's talk this evening and I've no hesitation in affirming that I'm sure that you all enjoyed it too.

And I think there's no better way for me to conclude than by, as it were, taking a bit of a leaf out of Abhaya's book. I must underline even one of the points that he made and that was in connection with rejoicing in merits because in the course of this convention, in the course of the whole convention, we've had many, many opportunities of rejoicing in people's merits, in one way and another. And of course, one of the ways, well one of the things that we've got to rejoice in is the talks that we've had in the course of the last week or so. We've had some very, very good talks indeed and it does really seem that within the Order we've got people who are really excellent speakers, excellent lecturers and I hope that they will go out more and more widely, go out more and more into the world, go to schools, go perhaps to other religious groups, other Buddhist groups, go perhaps to secular groups, humanist groups, groups of all sorts, audiences of all sorts, go forth to whoever will invite them, whoever who is willing to listen to them and proclaim the Dharma in the best possible way that they can.

I'm sure that very often within the FWBO we underestimate our talents. Perhaps even some of our talents are not used as much as they could be. Certainly very few people are born speakers. I can remember our very early speakers' classes. I really wish that those early speakers' classes had been tape-recorded. It would be very, very interesting to listen now to some of the very early talks of people who now are so fluent, who present the Dharma so beautifully, so accurately, so inspiringly, it would be very, very interesting to go back and just listen to their first five or ten minute talks. It's not just to have a good laugh, not just for that but in order to see, in order to as it were, assure or reassure ourselves the extent to which someone can cultivate a talent. Because I can remember so easily, just hearing people stammering their way through the three or four minutes of their first talk. People who now only a few years later, certain eight or nine years later, are really apparently gifted speakers. So this in a way gives hope to all that even though now you may feel that you can't express yourself very well, that you couldn't stand up in front of an audience and speak, but even though you may feel that now, with practice, with training, with coaching, with encouragement you can. There's probably not one single person present who could not be a very good and effective speaker because the knowledge is there, the experience is there to draw upon, knowledge of the Dharma, knowledge of different branches of arts and sciences, experience of the spiritual life, experience of communication, experience of spiritual friendship, that is all there. And as soon as you can, as it were, allow yourself to open your mouth and have the confidence as to speak about what you know and order that, and express it clearly and inspiringly, so much will come pouring forth, and you too could be a very, very good speaker.

Perhaps writing is not so easy. Writing requires a very great deal of discipline. Writing itself I've been saying recently is a spiritual discipline. But even if everybody doesn't become a writer I'm quite sure that even in this present audience, in this present Order, there are quite a few people who could be very good and effective writers if they just devoted some time to it. If they tried to improve their written communication. If they looked words up in the dictionary more frequently, if they asked themselves what a particular word really means, what they're trying to say, what they're trying

to communicate. If they were stricter with themselves in this way that they could be very much more effective writers and perhaps be able to contribute really good articles to Shabda, to the newsletter even if they weren't able to produce any books.

But as Abhaya mentioned, I have said that I'm sure that there's at least one book within every Order Member. I've borrowed this by the way from Dr. Samuel Johnson because I believe he said on one occasion that he believed that there was an interesting book in every man. At least, he didn't use the word autobiography, but at least the story of his own life because every man has gone through life, had some interesting experiences, has learned something. So he felt that every man's life especially if written by himself could be of interest to the general reader. You might not appreciate that's how interesting your life has been. The little fragments of Abhaya's life that he shared with us were really quite fascinating. One couldn't help almost identifying with that youthful figure in his black cassock and his black suit and his black mac over his arm and his black () on his head and with his trepidations about entering upon the priesthood and the very holy state of celibacy. Well he's no doubt had all sorts of second, third and fourth and fifth thoughts on that subject since then. (Laughter)

I won't say anything about the bed of roses. He gave us a sufficient hint about that himself. But yes, we all have these talents which we can cultivate and which some people have in fact cultivated and that gives cause for hope, gives encouragement to us all. So yes, we have heard in the course of this week or so so many really excellent talks and I'm sure that we all wish to rejoice in the merits of those speakers who in the course of the last so many days have shared with us their experience, the fruits of their studies, their reflections. We've after all covered a very, very wide range. I'm not mentioning the mixed convention but in the course of this men's convention we've had Buddhist and the Ancient World, Chinese Buddhism, T'ang Dynasty, we've even had something about eloquence - 'Why I give such excellent talks'. We've had a message as it were from inside monastery walls. We've also heard - I'm afraid I wasn't present on these two occasions - about the five niyamas and food and about devotion and we've heard about the Brahma life. We've heard about Shakespeare as educator. We've heard about Jung and our archetypes and tonight we've heard about the word in principle and in action, in the Western Buddhist Order.

So I'm sure we're all very grateful, to Kuladeva, to Hridaya, to Ratnabodhi, Aryacitta, Sagaramati, Saddhaloka, Kamalasila, Kovida, Prasannasiddhi, and last but not least Abhaya, for contributing in this way through their talks, through their lectures to the success of this convention which as I think we're all agreed has been a very successful convention indeed. So I'm very grateful, thanks to all of them. We do all of us rejoice most heartily in their merits.

At nine o'clock of course for the concluding puja.

End of session, tape - and of convention!

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