

## Ti Ratana Vandana seminar - Day 1. Tape 1 Side 1.

S: We'll start with the opening salutations because one might as well understand things in complete detail. We'll go through it word by word. First of all the Namō, namō simply means salutation, the suggestion being, in the context of Indian tradition, a sort of salutation with folded hands. There is a technical term for that which is Anjali, but Namō means basically that salutation. Not just a verbal salutation but as it were a physical salutation as well. So salutation. Tassa means "to him" and Bhagavato, usually translated "the blessed one" but there's quite a bit to be said about this. There are several ways of looking at this term. It's the term probably by which the Buddha is most often referred to in the Pali texts at least by his disciples. In its undeclined form it is Bhagavan; or Bhagavato, here Bhagavato because "to", to the Blessed one or to him. Bhaga is originally something like fortunate or lucky; so 'one who possesses all fortune or blessings, therefore one who possesses positive qualities, or good qualities. In this way the significance of the term grew. Bhaga has a short 'a' but sometimes it's also interpreted as though it was a long 'a', Bhaga which means a share, or one who possesses a share, that is to say one who possesses good qualities, or shares in good qualities, but whether one interprets it the one way or the other with the short a or the long a, it comes to the same thing in the end, that Bhagavan suggests one who possesses all positive or fortunate or auspicious characteristics, especially of a spiritual kind or spiritual nature. It's in a way not a very technical term, it's a popular term or popular word which has been taken over by Buddhism, as we'll find was also the case with the ten Arhants. Originally someone who was Bhagavan was someone who was simply fortunate or auspicious or lucky and who therefore stood out from the rest, stood out from the groups because he was more lucky, more fortunate, but gradually the associations came to be more one might say psychological, spiritual, until in the end the Buddhists used this term to mean someone who possessed spiritual blessings, spiritual good qualities, in other words the Buddha himself. So one might say that it's a feeling term rather than an intellectual term. The term Bhagavan suggests something positive and also impressive. One of the later derived meanings is 'the sublime one', it's sometimes translated in that way. So, somebody who impresses one, as it were on a lower level, by being fortunate, lucky, standing out from everyone else, possessing positive qualities, spiritual qualities, awe inspiring, sublime. It has all those sort of connotations but not a very precise doctrinal meaning. It's in a way a more popular term, even a more devotional term. It can be given all sorts of doctrinal interpretations, but that's a later development. So the English translation of Blessed One is not too bad, because blessed can mean blessed with good luck, blessed with good qualities, or spiritually blessed. The translation 'Lord' with its connotations of the British social system isn't very fortunate. (laughter) Following the interpretation of Bhagavan as having a long 'a', I've translated it recently as richly endowed one, which gives one more of the feeling of the thing, but it is much more of a devotional term than anything else. And it's usually the term, in the Pali scriptures which the disciples use when addressing the Buddha. They say Bhagavan. In modern India Bhagavan has been taken over by all the saints and mahatmas and we have Bhagavan Ramala Maharishi and Bhagavan Rajneesh. It's as though they all tried to steal at least a little of the reflected glory of the Buddha. Anyway we won't go into that. But this is what Bhagavan means; so it's "salutation to Him, to the Blessed One." [2] then to the Arhant, these are all epithets for the Buddha, Arahati, this word has a similar history. Arhant or Arahata means 'worthy'. This is the original meaning. Worthy even worshipful. It was pointed out by early translators of these texts that originally in ancient India the term meant something like 'his worship', as we speak of 'his worship the mayor'; it's a mode of address in that sort of ways so again this term, was gradually upgraded and acquired spiritual connotations, until in

the end Arhant came to mean someone who was spiritually worthy in the highest sense. It came to be used for an Enlightened disciple of the Buddha; one who gained his Enlightenment by following the path shown by the Buddhas. One who had destroyed all the ten fetters, all the ten samyojanas. There's a popular etymology of this, which explains it as Arahanta or Arihanta, Ari meaning enemy, Hanta meaning to destroy. So Arhant means one who has destroyed all enemies - the enemies of the defilements or the enemies of the passions and so on. This is not a scientific etymology, but it reflects the meaning which the term came to have in Buddhist tradition. So Arhant. So salutation to him, to the Blessed one, to the Arhant "Samma sambuddhasa" in the puja book there's a misspelling, there should be two esses at the end there, Samma sambuddhassa. Buddha we know, Buddha is from a root meaning 'to understand', again this was upgraded, you see this sort of tendency, when you have an experience which goes beyond previous experiences, goes beyond the normal experience of people, then you've no word to describe that, because the language or the terminology currently in use doesn't really cover, doesn't really extend to your experience because your experience goes beyond it, so you can either coin a completely new term, or you can stretch the old term to cover your new experience. So this is on the whole what the Buddhists tended to do in those early days, they stretched the old Indians or old Hindu, or old Vedic terms to cover their new, as it were, Buddhist meanings. This does give rise to a great deal of [3] confusion, in a way, because if you're not careful you may read into the terms, as used by Buddhism, the meanings they have in a Hindu or non-Buddhist context. Lokamitra was mentioning this, that there are all sorts of what we would regard as Buddhist terms, terms from Sanskrit or Pali, which have got similar parallel forms in modern Indian languages but completely different meanings. Take the word samadhi. Samadhi in popular Hindi, popular North Indian languages, means a tomb, or it means to die. A saint's samadhi is where he died, his tomb, it can apply to the monument put up over the place where he died. Dharma, which in Buddhism has got its own very definite meaning, Dharma means your caste-duty in Hinduism. This is how the term is used in North India generally. If a woman says "I'm doing my best to keep up my Dharma" it means 'my caste duties', which means not eating with certain people, not touching certain people, not taking water from a well which is used by lower caste people, etcetera, that's her Dharma she thinks. Or a thief may say, "Why do I steal? (Hindi (?) words meaning ... ) that's my Dharma," (laughter) You see what I mean, so, in India, in modern India, you have to be so careful teaching Buddhism, because you will use words from the Buddhist texts, from the Buddhist scriptures, in your Buddhist sense, but they'll be understood in their current Indian meaning.

KR: Even Parinirvana, Lokamitra was saying, just means To die. (laughter)

S: Right. This is among the Ex-Untouchables. They know that this term Parinirvana is applied to the final passing away of the Buddha, so they think that it's just a polite way of saying that the Buddha died. I was telling Lokamitra that someone come to me one day when I was in India going around amongst the ex-Untouchables, and said 'would you please come to my house tomorrow, (Hindi (?) words meaning ... ) my father's had his parinirvana.' (laughter) So there are so many pitfalls here. So, Buddha, to come back to sambuddhassa, Buddha meant originally 'one who understood, understood in a spiritual sense, understood the truth, understood ultimate reality, someone who was enlightened as we now say in English. But even in English you have to be very careful using this word Enlightened, because it can have connotations of eighteenth-century rationalist Enlightenment, so you must make it [4] clear that you mean a spiritual Enlightenment, not a purely rational Enlightenment. So sambuddha

is ... 'sam' indicates fullness, or completion, samma or sam really are the same, it's heaping superlative upon superlative, one could say 'fully and perfectly enlightened'. This brings us back to something, in a way, which is quite basic, which is whether the Buddha's Enlightenment was the same as that of his disciples or whether it went beyond it. As far as we can see from the very early texts, or as far as we can see was the case in the Buddha's own lifetime, the impression one gets is that there was not felt to be any difference between the actual content of the Enlightenment gained by the Buddha and the Enlightenment gained by the disciples. At a later date there was a term for the disciples Enlightenment which was 'annubodhi', annu means after or following, so the Bodhi of the disciple, the Enlightenment of the disciple, was attained or experienced by following after the Buddha's but that was the only difference. There was no as it were internal difference. And the Buddha Himself in several passages, in the Pali texts is represented as saying that you are enlightened in the same way that I am enlightened. For instance, when he sent out the first sixty disciples he said "I am free from all bonds, human and divine; you also are free from all bond, human and divine; go forth and teach the Truth." There is this passage in the Vinaya Pitaka. So on the whole it seems that in the Buddha's own lifetime it was not felt that there was any difference between the content of the Buddha's Enlightenment, the content of the Buddha's spiritual experience, and that of the disciples. The only difference was that He had attained first, and having attained, showed them the way; having seen the way they followed it, and attained the same. One might almost say exactly the same, spiritual experience as he had attained. But in later generations it seems that people became more and more aware of the fact that the Buddha must have had something that the others didn't. That the Buddha was after all the teacher of all the Arhants, at least originally, the Buddha had rediscovered the truth to Enlightenment, others had merely followed it after Him. So the feeling or belief grew up, and there may [5] have been traces of this even in the Buddha's own lifetime, that though the disciples were also Enlightened, in some mysterious way, the Buddha was sort of more Enlightened. Eventually this sort of feeling or this sort of belief hardened into definite doctrinal distinctions, and it was more or less explicitly stated, by some schools at least, that the Buddha had a particular kind of Enlightenment, that went beyond that of the disciples and even three kinds of Enlightenment were distinguished, that of the Arhant, that of the Pratyekabuddha, and that of the sammasambuddha, as He's now called. Whether one can take all that literally is a bit doubtful, but certainly one might say at least on the human level, as a personality, the Buddha was felt to be particularly impressive. He seemed to have an influence or an effect beyond that of the disciples. It may have been simply on account of human qualities, because it is also one of the beliefs of Buddhism that for your spiritual qualities to make themselves manifest you need a certain equipment of human qualities, otherwise your spiritual vision if you like doesn't get through. You need a sort of language, and that language can include your own physical and mental qualities. This is why it was considered in the Mahayana very important that as a Bodhisattva you should develop you should accumulate great merit's, and be born in your last life with a perfect, beautiful body, a very attractive appearance, so that your Enlightenment experience when you've gained it, has the most perfect vehicle possible through which to manifest. You see what I mean, so at least therefore, one could say, it was felt that even if the actual content of the Buddha's Enlightenment was not actually superior to that of the disciples, at least he had a more perfect vehicle, for it to manifest, and it's on account of that more perfect vehicle, including those more heroic qualities which had enabled him to find out the truth when nobody else had been able to do so, that he occupied such a particularly eminent position; among the disciples, even though they were enlightened, he still remained the teacher.

KR: It's quite interesting, because you can argue that even among enlightened beings [6] there's differences and individual characteristics, if not in the past. (?)

S: Again, in discussing this whole issue one must bear in mind one important assumption or limitation, when one speaks of somebody, when one discusses the whole question or issue in the terms of whether the Buddha's Enlightenment was higher than that of his disciples that you're assuming Enlightenment as a sort of fixed point that you can attain to. But actually that is only in a manner of speaking, if you look at the series of the twelve positive nidanas, well what do you find? You find, in dependence upon (a) , (b) arises, in dependence upon (b) , (c) arises and so on. There's a whole sequence. So finally when in dependence upon the eleventh nidana the twelfth arises, you stop there, and the question was raised, even in the Buddha's own lifetime, do you need to stop there? In a sense you don't, you can also think of Enlightenment not as finally arriving at a fixed state or a fixed point, so that there you are, you've gained it you've attained it, but as a kind of permanent progression in this sort of way, in a definite direction or in a certain direction. You see the difference? In other words think of it in temporal terms rather than in spatial terms. So if you look at it in that way then the question of whether the Buddha's Enlightenment was different from or superior to that of his disciples becomes a bit meaningless. They're all going in the same direction, as it were, within each one of them there is this creative process going on; that in dependence upon something positive, something still more positive arises, in dependence upon that something more positive still; and this is not a process which ever comes to a halt. This would seem to be a truer, and in a way, more Buddhistic, way of looking at the matter.

KR: When is the point in time when somebody is said to be Enlightened then?

S: One can again look at this in several ways, bearing in mind that in the early days of Buddhism the doctrinal distinctions, which were later on made, were not made. You've heard of stream-entry, stream-entry is the point beyond which you don't regress, and [7] it would seem that in very early Buddhism or in the very early days of Buddhism, the conception was more of someone who had 'gone upstream' (...) is the term. That is to say one who had passed the point of no return and had gone upstream. So at that stage it would seem, there was no enquiry as to how far he had gone, etc. The great point was that he had passed the point of no return, and he'd gone further on. He couldn't come back, he could only progress after that. So in a way that is the basic distinction, whether you've reached that point of no return or not. So in a way you could say that it's the point of no return which is the crucial point and not the point of Enlightenment. The point of no return is where you switch over from the cyclical to the spiral. After that you just go on and on and on, you needn't think of reaching a definite full-stop anywhere. Later on they distinguished between the once-returner, the non-returner, then the arhant and maybe, in a sense, beyond the arhant the fully Enlightened Perfect Buddha, but the really crucial point is this point of entering the stream and going up stream.

KR: Is that what happened to the Buddha underneath the Bodhi tree?

S: This is usually spoken of as Enlightenment in the later sense, not of stream-entry, but of a point very much further on which is regarded more or less as a fixed point. But I think that in a sense it shouldn't be regarded as that too strictly. I've pointed out, I think in one lecture, that it's as though there isn't just a fixed point in time where the Buddha became Enlightened, but it's as though there's a whole series of experiences spread out over a period of several weeks. For instance, what illustrates that is this; there's the famous request from Brahma, Brahma

Sahampatti. The Buddha says originally, after gaining Enlightenment let's say, (when he uses the term here it may not be in a highly specialized sense) when he just 'understood things', he was inclined not to share his understanding with others, because he felt that they wouldn't be able to understand. And then according to the account Brahma Sahampatti appeared and said that people are perishing for lack of this teaching, so please teach. And then the Buddha [8] looked out, saw all the different beings in different stages of development, like a bed of lotus-flowers, and then he decided to teach. So then compassion arose, you could say. So if you say that the Buddha was definitely and fully Enlightened, and decided not to teach, this would suggest that compassion was not part of the Enlightenment experience. Whereas practically all schools of Buddhism maintain that compassion in the transcendental sense is an integral part of the Enlightenment experience. You can't have the one without the other. But if you take this account literally, it's as though compassion is something added to the Enlightenment experience, not essential to it. The Buddha need not have taught, he still would have been the Buddha. But certainly the Mahayana at least would say that a Buddha who does not teach is not a Buddha. An Enlightened being who has no compassion is not an Enlightened being. So therefore you cannot but regard Brahma's request and the Buddha's response as being a sort of continuation of, or an extension of, a further unfolding of the whole Enlightenment experience. It seems a bit unrealistic to believe that just at a particular moment it all happened, because it was a very overwhelming experience, a very shattering experience in a way. So it seems more reasonable to suppose it spread itself, including its repercussions, in different ways over quite a period. That is the impression we get if we read those texts, that it spread itself over a period of some weeks. So, we could say, this is a little hypothetical, but at that time, during that period, the Buddha entered the stream and went several stages further on, and that process had various repercussions throughout his whole being, which resulted in Him being completely transformed. But exactly how far it went is difficult to say. How can one dogmatize and say that it went so far and that was the point of Enlightenment. Certainly he didn't just enter the stream, he entered the stream and went quite a way up, or one could even say that during the Buddha's own lifetime, the process is still going on. In relation to human beings it may seem that the Buddha is, as it were, static, because the situation in which the Buddha finds himself rather limits his possibility of expression, but in himself he may be going on and on [9] way beyond human sight, even beyond the sight of the Arhants. So maybe it's better, or certainly it's better, to think of Enlightenment in these sort of terms. It's the continual progression of that irreversible process, not a fixed state in which you settle down. Because you could say that life is constantly changing, your conditions are constantly changing, so if you are Enlightened, your Enlightenment does not consist in maintaining a sort of fixed state of mind, but in responding creatively to all the different circumstances that may arise and in the midst of which you may find yourself. And the more and more practice you get, the more and more creative becomes your response. It's cumulative, as the whole conception of the spiral path and the creative path suggests. It's not a fixed position from which you operate.

KR: More a way of operating.

S: More a way of operating, in which you become more and more highly skilled. You could say, you could use a medical comparison, that when you qualify as a doctor, you could say that's like entering the stream. But what happens is that with the same stock of knowledge you go on operating, I don't (laughter) mean in the surgical sense, you go on functioning as a doctor, and as a result of your contact with your patients, you become more and more skilled in functioning as a doctor, and your original stock of knowledge may even be modified. It's

basically the same, but it may be modified by your experience. And in any case you deploy it ever more and more skilfully. So it's more like that, not that you operate with exactly the same factual knowledge, exactly the same body of factual knowledge all through your career. It's a flexible thing.

KA: Because existence must really be infinitely subtle. You get more and more in touch with the subtleties of it.

KR: I suppose what tends to give the impression, you know, that Enlightenment is a static and fixed thing, is the Zen story of somebody's gaining Enlightenment and then it's all over: they might as well go home...

S: And sometimes they do go home, as it were.

KM: Is it a term that we use like we use the term infinity? [10] I mean we can use it as a point just because it's useful to use it in that way, but it doesn't actually mean that it's a set number.

S: Right.

So one could paraphrase, *Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhasa* - Salutation to Him, to the Blessed One, to the Emancipated One, to the Infinitely Creative One. It means something much more like that, rather than full, perfectly enlightened one.

KA: Could you say that total Enlightenment was a sort of hypothetical pole?

S: Yes you could, yes.

KA: Just a tendency...

S: A hypothetical pole, it being understood that that pole is not located anywhere. You see what I mean? You could think of it in terms of mathematics as it were, it's a pole which is infinitely far on, and which therefore is never attained. And which you are ever in process of attaining. But again that's just a way of looking at it, to account for your continual, uninterrupted, ever increasing, ever cumulative, or ever more and more cumulative creativity. You posit that infinitely distant... what did you say?

KA: Hypothetical pole.

S: Hypothetical pole.

KA: Because then there is still direction...

S: Yes, but on the other hand it's not as it were a pole which has an opposite, it's not a one-sided pole, because one could stress here the *samma*. *Samma* means whole, total, perfect. Not in the sense of spatial completeness, but in a sense of absence of one-sidedness, or absence of reactivity.

KA: That's the gravitational pull...

S: The gravitational pull being exercised by the Transcendental, with a capital T, again it is hypothetical. There's not a thing standing out there called the transcendental and exercising an actual pull. One could say, and this is a bit sort of interpretative, one could say nammo tassa, salutation to Him, represents a salutation to as it were three aspects of the Buddha. Bhagavan representing the Buddha as it were the object [11] of devotion, you know, the object of compassion, because it's through his compassion that He comes into relation with the disciple, the disciples call Him Bhagavan. Bhagavan suggests an object of the disciples devotion, Arhant suggests the wisdom aspect, the destruction of all the enemies, the overcoming of all the defilements, annihilation of delusion, and so on, and samma sambuddhasa - the Complete Perfect Buddha suggests the two aspects coming together. One could look at it like that. So the vandana begins, one might say, with a salutation directed to the Buddha as the highest ideal. The Buddha is saluted first of all one could say, in an historical sense, on an historical plane, out of gratitude for being the originator of the spiritual tradition. And secondly, on a more immediate spiritual plane, as it were, the Buddha or Buddhahood, represents what one is actually aiming towards, oneself - that state of infinite spiritual creativity.

All right, let's go on then to the Vandana itself. The first line really we've dealt with because the same terms occur. Itipi so, samma sambuddha. Itipi so means He is indeed or indeed He is, so what is He indeed? Well that is the Buddha, the Bhagavan, the Arhant, Samma Sambuddha. So this we've already explained.

KR: That's quite a nice way of putting it though, indeed He is, isn't it?

S: Iti is 'thus', pi is an emphatic particle, indeed, and 'so' means He. Thus indeed is he. Iti pi so bhagava araham samma sambuddho, and then a whole string of epithets. Incidentally, this whole string of epithets occurs quite frequently in the Pali texts when the Buddha is referred to or described, and likewise the epithet for the Dharma and the Sangha. So, 'vijja-carana sampanno', sampanno means 'fully and completely endowed with', so what is he fully and completely endowed with? Vijja and carana. Vijja, the Pali vijja is equivalent to the Sanskrit vidya, vijja means knowledge, again a word the meaning of which has been upgraded. The Buddha is endowed with knowledge, there are subtle distinctions, but the vijja which he is endowed with or the vidya, is basically or essentially the same as Bodhi. Perhaps, I was going to say, there's a more intellectual flavour, but not in later traditions. You remember vidya or vijja, occurs in the negative or privative form as avijja or [12] avidya, which is the first of the nidanas. In dependence upon avidya or avijja, arise the samskaras, the karma-formations. So avijja, or nescience or ignorance, is a very basic category of Buddhism. So this is the opposite, this is vijja or vidya, there's a discussion about vidya in one of the more recent study seminars, one held two years ago. Anyone remember or know which one that is? There we've gone into the meaning of vidya, I think following Guenther to some extent, and we saw there that it was an appreciative, almost aesthetic, understanding. A whole, a perfect understanding, whereas avidya or avijja was the opposite.

So broadly speaking, vijja or vidya represents Bodhi or Enlightenment. Carana, carana literally means walking but it also means practise or living, it's from the same root as carya when we say that the bodhisattva's carya, the bodhicarya, the Dharmacarya, Brahmachari, it's all from the same root, carana, to walk, to go, to live. So vijja-carana, usually translated knowledge and conduct, though conduct is a very weak translation. It's more like understanding and implementation, you could even say theory and practice, except that it's

not just theory, it's an actual realization. So you've got the two sides, you've got the inner realization and the external, the outer practical exemplification, and the Buddha is fully endowed with both. He has the inner realization of the truth or ultimate reality, and externally He fully embodies that, or fully exemplifies that in his actual conduct, in his whole way of life. So He is equally endowed with vijja and carana. So it suggests that in a way at all levels of spiritual development, at all levels of the development of the individual, there must be a balance between what you know and what you do. I mean nowadays in the West one could say the tendency is to accumulate lots of vidya or so called vidya, but very little carana. The two must be kept in equipoise.

KA: What about pratyekabuddhas then?

S: Pratyekabuddhas are more a doctrinal category than anything else, one never actually encounters pratyekabuddhas, or people claiming to be pratyekabuddhas in Buddhist history. Theoretically, or doctrinally, a pratyekabuddha is supposed to be one who gains Enlightenment, without a teacher, but who does not impart that he has gained. So it's a rather odd sort of category, it seems to have been introduced for reasons of neatness, to have an intermediate category between the arhant and the Buddha, which presupposes that you've distinguished or divided the arhant from the Buddha. So this is a very important point this keeping your vijja and your carana more or less equal. Otherwise, if you [13] have too much vijja, or pseudo vijja and very little carana, you become what they call dragon's head and snakes body. We touched upon this in a seminar not so long ago. Nowadays one finds that it's possible to read so many books, to read so many Buddhist texts Hindu texts, all sorts of things. You can have a fair intellectual understanding of these things, but your life can remain completely unchanged, you live just like everybody else, and this seems to be happening especially in Buddhist circles in the United States, that people go along to Buddhist groups, belong to Buddhist groups, go along to gompas and so on, then read all these things, they even perhaps write books, or even maybe translate texts from Tibetan, but their way of life remains the same as any other middle-class professional American. They live like an American lawyer or doctor or psychoanalyst or therapist, there's no difference. So that's because there's very little carana. So that the Buddha is fully endowed with both vijja and carana on the highest possible level, so you could say that no carana fully expresses your vijja because your carana is within a very limited situation, a very limited context, but your vijja may be unlimited. But even so, your vijja should find the fullest possible expression that the objective nature of your circumstances permits.

KM: It's a funny kind of understanding that doesn't have any practical application isn't it? I mean when you're talking about people who understand something and don't practice, they haven't really understood.

S: They haven't really understood I mean their ... (end of side 1 of tape 1)

Side 2. tape 1.

S: That's one of the reasons, I think, it's so important, that in the FWBO there must be a new lifestyle set up, that's why I attach great importance to the communities. Especially the men's communities, because unless you've got something like that, unless you've got something that breaks up the social set-up, the existing social order, it remains academic, virtually. Just pietistic. But if you set-up communities, especially [14] men's communities and women's

communities, well there's a different sort of social set-up immediately. You abolish the family at a stroke don't you, and everything that that implies, the whole way of life is just abolished? People are condoned (?) and that's a very, very big thing to have done, a really massive source of conditioning is removed, so unless one does something like this there's no real carana, it's all quite empty pseudo vijja. So I think, with the possible exception of team-based right livelihood, which we have yet to develop properly, the single-sex community is probably our most powerful means of frontal assault on the existing social set-up. Because it changes so many things, it changes your whole pattern of domestic life, it changes your whole pattern of work, it changes the whole rhythm of your day to day existence, it changes your psychological attitude, changes your emotional attitude, corrects your emotional dependence, gives you a completely different environment and context within which to function. If just by a sort of effort of imagination, supposing each one of you were to project yourself into a different situation where you had a full-time job, 9 to 5, where you had a wife, and one or two children (laughter). Now what do you think your state of mind would be like? What do you think your prospects would be like? They'd be very, very different. And what do you think you'd make of your Buddhism, or what do you think you'd do with it? With luck you'd get in a short meditation before you went to work, and in the evening when you came back home, if you weren't too tired, and if the wife didn't want you to do something, and with luck you'd get along to a class once or twice a week, with luck. That would become more and more difficult as your life at home became more and more demanding, that's if you had more children. It would be difficult to go away for retreats because you'd have to take the family on holidays and you couldn't do both perhaps. Well it doesn't really bear thinking about, does it?

KR: It sounds almost as big a commitment as being at Sukhavati. (laughter)

S: In a sense yes, in a sense no. The difference being that there it's all on your [15] shoulders, but at Sukhavati, whatever responsibility there is spread out over so many broad backs. So I really do feel that if we set up a substantial number of communities of this sort ... mixed communities won't do, one might say that's only the family 'writ large', to paraphrase Milton, you know the song by Milton where he says 'New presbyter is but old priest writ large'. So you could say the mixed community, maybe calling itself spiritual community, unless under very exceptional circumstances, is only the family writ large. So that is really almost out, it is the single-sex communities that are going to be the really revolutionary spearhead almost of the movement. Set those up all over the place, and very radical changes will come about in so many individuals, through them, in quite large sections of society. Anyway, that's all emerged from Vijja-carana sampanno, one might say this equalization or equilibrium of vijja and carana, theory and practice, insight and activity.

KM: It seems to me that unless you have some practise you can really get away with theoretical knowledge that won't bear up to practise.

S: Or one might even say, taking the word practise in the narrow sense, practise is not enough. You've got to have a whole way of life and a whole objective social context. It's not enough even to have a personal practise, because your family man could have a personal practise, he could even keep it up, but it would be just like the prisoner sitting in his cell, and reading a book about freedom, yes, he'd read it every day, quite faithfully, but he's still a prisoner, he can't break-out. So your family man who even does his practise regularly is very much in that sort of position. It's good that he does it, it certainly has some effect on him, some beneficial effect, but even that is not really enough. It's just like the prisoner in the jail,

instead of having to break stones, he's put in charge of the library. (laughter) which is better, but he's still in prison.

KR: But isn't being imprisoned more a state of mind than whether you live in a family or a single sex community? Just because you go and live in a single-sex community doesn't mean you're going to start leading a creative spiritual life.

S: No it doesn't automatically, it still requires your co-operation, but then the facilities [16] are all to hand, and the cramping conditions which you experience in the small nuclear family set-up is just no longer there, you just have the opportunity, you have the freedom. I mean the more I come into contact with family situations, the more I feel that they're so stuffy, they really are, they're so claustrophobic. They sort of hem you in all round, you can hardly stir, hand or foot, especially if you're permanently there, in the sense that you've got permanent long-term commitments in that direction. I think that the lay devotee or lay follower in the strict sense is a rara avis, a very rare bird indeed, there's so much room here for rationalization whereas in the spiritual community you may not be very much up to scratch, but there are people to help you keep up to scratch, and the situation itself is like that.

KR: What do you think the rationalization is that the family situation opens you up to?

S: Well the main one that I've encountered is this; that someone sort of suggests that he is leading a very unselfish life. The unmarried man, the single man, the bachelor, even the spiritual bachelor, is selfish, is only thinking about himself and his own pleasure. Whereas the family man has taken on the responsibility of looking after others he is looking after his wife, he's looking after children, he's working very hard for them, he's leading a very unselfish life. So obviously, unselfishness is a spiritual quality, a spiritual person should be unselfish, so the family man, being the embodiment of unselfishness, is leading a highly spiritual life, in fact, by devoting himself to his wife and children, doing everything for their sake. Now how would you ... you'll meet this in India, you'll hear it from Brahmins especially, and what would you say to this?

KR: What would you say to it? (laughter)

S: Well I try and sort out the mess in this sort of way; well why has that person entered into that situation? Why did he get married? Was it out of purely objective reasons? (laughter & giggles) That he had this disinterested desire to support this woman? (more laughter & giggles) Nothing in it for him? No return? Purely selfless, is that it? The [17] rationalization is on a basis... the unselfishness... you see the householder, that is the family man, gets himself into a situation for the most purely subjective reasons. That's why he has got the wife and that's why he has got the children. You could say all right, from a purely biological point of view, that's fine, it's quite normal, it's quite healthy and so on, there's no criticism of it on that level, but he's certainly not looking after them out of motives of spiritual unselfishness. He's landed himself in that situation as the logical or biological consequence of following certain desires which may be healthy, from a natural point of view, but which certainly couldn't be described as unselfish. And that he's not acknowledging the factors which brought him into that situation in the first place. That's where the rationalization comes in, where the hypocrisy even, comes in. So sometimes I say well look, if your wife or if say some young woman was willing you should marry her, and look after her, but you'd never be able to sleep with her, would you go into it? Or if you were to adopt children, who weren't yours, or if she was to

have children which weren't yours, would you go on unselfishly labouring for them? Supporting them? Looking after them? So it's a really pathetic sort of rationalization. Of course, one has to admit that even in that sort of situation some small qualities of unselfishness may be needed and may be developed, but the basis of the whole thing is just natural desire, so one need not find fault with those but they need not masquerade as higher spiritual unselfishness. And you hear some house-holders speak, especially in India, it's as though they're sailing into married life and into family life from purely Bodhisattva motives, and they'll tell you, and I've been told this, that I'm just as much a monk as anyone in a monastery, my house is like a monastery, etc. etc. They tell you this, I'm leading a purely unselfish life, I have no self interest, I think only of my wife and children. This is the sort of thing that one gets I'm sure you'll meet this if you move outside ex-untouchable circles, but you won't find it among them, I think that would be most unlikely. It's a very sophisticated sort of attitude. It's the sort of attitude which develops where spiritual life or religious life has become something respectable, and something everybody feels he ought to do or ought [18] to live up to but basically he doesn't want to. It's like the Englishman who thinks perhaps that to serve king and country is being religious, what more could you do? What more could you expect than that? To serve king and country? So therefore even a personal implementation is not enough, a personal practise is not enough, but there needs to be a change in the whole social order to which one belongs, because you're being affected by that all the time. So you may be the most backsliding member of the community at Sukhavati, you may get up late and you may not meditate very often, but it still all has an effect on you to some extent, you are changed to some extent. I've noticed that with some who've been up at Padmaloka, you know Padmaloka in away is nothing to boast about, nothing to brag about, but I've seen people coming up and in the course of a month there is a definite positive change, a change for the better, even though it's so easy going there in a way. Even though perhaps those people haven't made much of an effort, but even within a month there's some change. But you wouldn't have seen that change if you'd sent them home to stay with their mum and dad and all that.

KA: It's just removing limit's.

S: Removing limit's. So after that comes sugato, or sugata.

KR: Sorry, what's sampanno?

S: It's 'perfectly endowed with'. That refers to the previous vijja and carana. Sampanno means... these are all epithets or titles for the Buddha, so vijja carana sampanno means the One perfectly endowed with knowledge and practise. So the whole thing reads 'thus indeed is He, that is to say He is the blessed one, He is the Arhant, He is the perfectly and completely Enlightened one, He is the one fully endowed with knowledge and conduct, and then He is the sugato. This 'o' at the end indicates the declined form, the ordinary normative form is sugata, like Buddha, so sugata, usually translated 'the happy one' literally 'the well-gone one.' The one gone to a happy state, gone to a happy destiny. Gati is used for the five or six realms of conditioned existence, the world of the gods, the world of the asuras and so on. These are called the gatis or goings, so [19] in a very general sense, one who is sugata is one who has gone to or is likely to go to a good state, a good re-birth. That is to say in the realm of the gods or in the human realm. In the case of the Buddha it doesn't mean a good rebirth it means one who has well gone or gone well in the highest sense, that is to say to Nirvana or Enlightenment. And who is therefore happy. Usually translated one who has gone to a happy

state or 'the happy one'. So this draws attention to a very important aspect of spiritual life and individual development, which is of course the fact that it is emotionally positive. That it is a path of increasing happiness.

KM: Going back to that thing of the families, I think that's one of the biggest drawbacks of family situations. I mean when I stayed with my parents in Zambia, it was just a constant struggle to be positive, against their... almost like their karma of negativity they'd built up in that situation.

S: Yeah. But I wonder why this is. Is it inherent, do you think in the family situation? What makes it that way then? Is it only the nuclear family? Could the extended family be better? There seems to be somewhat less tension in the extended family, though a lot of squabbling nonetheless, especially among the womenfolk.

KA: There's no higher ideal necessarily in the family.

S: Yes, it's all very much on the animal level.

KA: On a survival level.

S: Survival level, yes.

KA: And possibly the survival of the family as a whole, not even so much on an individual level.

KM: And I think if there is any remnants of ideals from earlier days, as they fail to develop at all in that situation, the fact that people feel they've stagnated is quite unpleasant too.

S: Yeah... well they might see it simply in terms of not having succeeded, and very few people do as it were succeed in life, even on their own terms. I mean a few may, who [20] attain eminence in some profession or skill, you get a quite definite satisfaction from that; they've made something from their lives, but they're a minority.

KA: And even so, can that be anything but hollow, really - I mean if they feel it really... I think that's the thing I feel in families, that life is so hollow because it's so immediate, it's these 70 puny years, and nothing beyond.

KR: It's all sort of preordained, isn't it, it's not open ended at all. There's no excitement. (laughter). I suppose that's why marriages break up, because people get so bored, that they start quarrelling for something to do.

S: Well they get bored even on the most mundane level, they even get sexually bored. After a few years, you know, within a strict monogamous context. But you know, to try and argue the case for the family, supposing somebody uses, acting devils advocate for the minute, supposing somebody takes the line; well the family is your base from which you operate, you don't expect much from the family, but it's your safe, secure base. In the case of a man, that is. You've got your job, your career and you can still expand in all sorts of ways.

KA: Yes your job would be your area of operation.

KR: It sounds all right in theory, but in practice it seems rarely to work out that way.

S: Presumably because to really succeed in your job you've got to give yourself to it completely. Which means you spend very little time at home, your wife gets dissatisfied, complains that you just treat it like a hotel, and she's got nothing to do and she's bored so she starts looking around and first of all it's the women's clubs and then she starts going out with somebody else,...

KA: Can you imagine the treacherous boredom of being a housewife today? It must be incredible.

S: But that was possible more in the old days when there was a bigger, more extended family, and there were other people at home.

KA: And there was work to do. Nowadays it's all machines and...

[21]

S: That's true. I mean you see this in India, a woman is busy all the time, and usually she's, I won't say happy, but she's contented, in this dumb cow-like sort of way, I mean she goes and draws water (laughter) and you know you have to light the fire every morning, you don't just switch something on, you light the fire, you blow it for half an hour and then you go and get the water and you put it on and you cook and this fills in the day.

KA: Imagine just having to open a packet of this and then switching on the washing machine ...

S: You have to go to the river, and pound your clothes, you go with other women, you have a good old chat. So at least it fills up life, but the modern wife, living at home, surrounded by gadgets can quickly and easily get bored and bang goes your safe base. (laughter) Well, can anything be said for the home? For the family life?

KR: Well it gives you the chance of rearing children.

S: Yes, this is the only thing that presumably the generations have to go on, but is that even the best way to do that? I mean the modern nuclear family.

KR: I'm sure it isn't.

KA: What would the alternative be? The extended family, or the large community?

S: Well you could have an extended family which would be I think more positive, though not ideal, and you could, I mean in a more ideal situation take the boys away from that situation, take them away from their mothers when they were seven or eight and put them in maybe a special kind of men's community where there were men who devote themselves to looking after them, to educating them, and so on, in a more tribal sort of way. That probably would be better.

KR: I think that would work if everyone was living in a very small area...

S: That means an extended colony.

KR: Yeah, a real community.

S: With these constituent units, you know including a women's log house and... (laughter)

[22]

KR: We don't want to get too institutionalized. (laughter)

S: If this is to be extended on a large scale it probably would have to be a bit institutionalized, because it's only possible otherwise when people are truly individuals. So at present it's just the case when the individual, when he begins to feel that he's an individual, opting out, and getting up his own structures. In other words, coming back to what I said before, well the single-sex communities. I think probably for quite a long time to come that will be the tendency. When you've got a really large number of those then perhaps you can think in terms of setting up one of these other arrangements for larger numbers of people who perhaps are not so committed but who would benefit nonetheless. But what I feel about the family situation, whenever I encounter it or go into it for a few minutes, is it is stuffy, and maybe it is that lack of opportunity, the lack of excitement even. It is repetitious.

KD: Yeah, I went to visit my brother last weekend, he's fairly well married, got one child and another one on the way. And I went out for a drink with him in the evening, and he just said that he'd given up. Given up the fight, he'd just resigned himself.

S: So what did you say?

KD: Well you know ... well I've spoken to him about the Friends and Buddhism before, but he feels limited by his situation.

S: But what do you think impelled him into that situation? Why does a man get married? This is the basic question.

KM: Well sometimes they just can't think of anything else. I mean I've had lifts from a lorry driver who said, when I told him about our community, " Why didn't somebody tell me about this sort of thing before I got married?" And particularly in Norfolk where it's still very traditional, they don't see anything else.

KA: Some men do it to leave home.

S: That's true. They don't see any other way of getting away from home except to another home. They take it for granted they can't look after themselves.

KA: And they can't possibly build a decent family on that basis, it's defeated from the [23] beginning.

S: I remember, for instance, there was a karate teacher called George, who was first of all a pupil of Terry Dukes. Anyone remember him or meet him? He was a very nice chap indeed. Anyway, he lived at home, with his mother, and his mother used to say, so he told us, she'd never allow George to leave home. He'd leave home when he got married and go straight off to some good woman. From one good woman to another. She'd never allow him to live on his

own, she said. A karate teacher. (laughter) A very good one too. A very nice chap.

KA: That's an odd word, that would allow, because it assumes some sort of poser which one person has over another and which is unfounded.

S: Well this has its roots way back in civilization. In the Old Testament you find, and in Roman law you find, that the father was not just head of the family, he was head of the tribal group-cum-family. He was a sort of king-cum-magistrate, he add power of life and death. Even, in historical times, the Roman father had the right to put his son to death. But it's logical in a way, if a woman has got the right to have an abortion, she says "Well! It's mine! I can do with it as I like." In the same way, you produced the child he belongs to you! You do as you like with him. The whole theory was, of course, that the child was produced by the seed of the man. Until recently it was not known that the embryo was produced by the... come on, you give us all the technical terms, the spermatozoa and the ovum. It was thought that the female only provided nutriment. That the seed originated entirely from the father, and that the seed was planted in the body of the female and nourished by the female, just as the earth nourishes the seed. Therefore life came entirely from the father, therefore the father had complete right over his progeny. He'd given them life...! He had the right to destroy them. They were his seed.

KA: That also shows how scientific ideas go hand in hand with social values.

S: Yes, right right. So we know that, scientifically, that the male and the female play an equal part in this way, so this has to some extent, evened things up. But it has also to `some extent gone to the other extreme with some women claiming you know, total [24] rights over the products of their wombs. Abnegating or denying any right of the father.

KM: Far from being a place where unselfishness takes place, families are hot-beds of selfishness. I mean people just making demands on each other, and insisting that other people do what they want.

S: Well this is the sort of complaint that parents usually make about children. I encountered this among the Nepalese, you know where they're very traditional people. Fathers would often come to me and complain about their sons. Maybe 20, 22,23 that sort of age, you know the excitable age (laughter) and the gist of the complaint was, you know, that the impudent young so and so, he wants to do what he wants to do! (laughter) He won't do what he's told. I want him to do this, or I want him to do that, and its taken for granted that this is absolutely right. I mean, I'm his father, and he won't do it. Bring him to reason, bring him to his senses. Please reason with him. (giggles)

KR: What did you say?

S: Well, I knew it wasn't much use saying anything to the father, I'd say something like you know, the way things are, young men are hard to handle, Ill just do what I can, I'm not very hopeful, yes, he's very headstrong ... OK, I'll talk to him. The boy would come along and we'd have a good heart to heart talk. You know I'd see quite clearly what was happening. Usually they felt that I was more on their side than on their father's side. They just wanted to make their own choices and their own decisions usually. Sometimes a bit rash, but usually not. Father always played safe. Father has got a nice cosy little job ready, near where he works

(laughter) to keep an eye on his son, and see him two or three times during the day, make sure he wasn't going with women, he might get married or something like that. You know, mother would be getting ready a nice wife for him, of her choice (laughter), the sort of daughter-in-law she'd really like. (laughter) And he was just trying to get away from them. He wanted to go to Calcutta. The father would say well what will you do in Calcutta? That big, dirty, dangerous city? You probably won't get any work, you'll probably become a lounge and a loafer - might have to beg even. The boy would think I don't care if I have to beg just want to get away from home. [25] There'd be such rebellious feelings sometimes, in Nepalese young men and the fathers and grandfathers really used to put them down. So I don't think we appreciate sometimes the strength of the old-style traditional family, the extent to which it imposes conformity. Again one must understand it properly, this is not bad in a strictly biological sense, it does make for the survival of the group, the survival of the species, but, you know, when individuals start developing values change completely.

KM: But it's also quite hypocritical in the family, isn't, because I've had that selfishness talked about as that's love, that's ... (laughter)

S: Yeah

KM: "You know, of course we want you to do what we want, we love you." (laughter)

S: "We want you to make the right choice because we want you to be happy." Probably there comes to be less and less of this as one goes up the social scale, where people are accustomed to a bit of mobility. But amongst ordinary people, ordinary families, they're very, very concerned. So it's very important that we should be able to show people an alternative, not just talk about an alternative. Not just run the family down but show a living alternative which is an actual option. Anyway, sugata... we're getting off the track a bit, but it is really relevant isn't it.? Maybe a few words about India in this connection. You know, in India family life is very strong, you've probably gathered that already. All the ex-Untouchable people that you meet will be people firmly embedded in families. The only sort of accepted alternative is the life of the monk, in the strict ascetic sense. There's no such concept, as it were, of the young 'man-about-town', the happy bachelor, the gay bachelor or anything like that. This just does not fit into their scheme of things at all. If they hear of such a monster, a young man who goes around with women and who isn't married, well - they've seen things like that on some films... (laughter). It's a sort of enormity that doesn't fit, they exist on the fringes of society, they haunt brothels and places like that. They've no idea about someone who is relatively free in a social sense. There may be one or two, you know just a few Western or English educated people, you [26] know who are a bit familiar with that sort of possibility, but it's far from being an effective possibility for the young Indian.

KR: It's incredible when you think about it isn't it.

S: Yes... maybe a little bit for the student, but not much. So it's a very very different social set-up as you'll very soon see, that it's either 100% family or 100% orthodox asceticism. There's nothing sort of in between.

KR: Do they know about Western culture though?

S: They do know, broadly speaking, but they think of it in terms of morality and immorality,

and they like to think that in the West there's lots of immorality (laughter) because the West hasn't got the culture that India has got. You must remember that they've got just one big label, the vast majority of Indian people, for anything outside the orthodox social system, and getting married when you are young. Any sort of sexual irregularity is just plain, straight forward immorality. And totally inconsistent with any religious or spiritual life. This is the way the vast majority of people see it. There's no idea of, well leaving aside spiritual considerations, the socially free individual, and certainly not in the case of women, that is utterly unthinkable. They've only one word for women who deviate in the slightest from the accepted standards of conduct for respectable women; they just say she's a prostitute. If they see an unmarried woman talking or laughing with an unmarried man, look at her, look at the prostitute they say. That is exactly how they see things.

KR: What's their morality built upon?

S: One could say custom. Just custom, just the sheer inertia of that society, which functions quite well for the majority of people within it, but which allows very little scope for the individual, that is why, if you want to get free from it, the only thing to do is to break away totally i.e. become an ascetic. You cannot be free within secular society, you have to get outside it altogether as a sannyasin or as a Bhikkhu.

KM: So that's why, in the East, you can't really have a committed lay follower, if [27] they're committed they have to be a Bhikkhu.

S: Yes, right, but one of the things that I'm not happy about is this hard and fast distinction, as it were, that itself, I think, is something to be broken down. Therefore I don't want that when the FWBO goes to India, we have the yellow-robed anagarikas, who are assimilated to bhikkhus and who are pure and holy and outside social life, and the upasakas, you know with their white kesas, from whom nothing much is expected - 'Well, they're just worldly people...' I don't want that sort of division developing. When you and Lokamitra go you'll see a gravitational pull exerted on the pair of you by Indian society and Indian culture. He will be pulled towards the bhikkhus - they will feel he's one of them and he'll fraternise with them - you'll be pulled more towards the lay people, which will be the family type of lay people, they will feel that you're more one of them, just because you're not in yellow robes. But this sort of gravitational pull you must both resist and insist on the point or the fact of the common spiritual commitment. Which is the going for refuge. But the FWBO as a whole will be subject to this pull in India.

KD: I thought all order members who were going out to India to do any work there were going to have the anagarika ordination.

S: Yes and no, well you can't say yes and no, its got to be all or nothing, it can't be either all or not all, but if all of them are anagarikas it plays into the hands of the system. They think that monks have come out and therefore they get the idea that what really matters is the external things, not the actual spiritual commitment.

KM: It lets them off the hook.

S: It lets them off the hook, yes, it lets them off the hook exactly. This is what you hear from so many lay people, Buddhist lay-people in the ordinary sense, "Well, we're not

bhikkhus, ... " the bhikkhus as it were lead the spiritual life for them vicariously, and they're very particular about keeping the bhikkhus up to scratch. (laughter) "Look, shouldn't you be a vegetarian, you're a Buddhist." "Oh I'm just an Upasaka, just a lay-follower, what can be expected of me?" Or if they tell a lie or something, "Oh, I'm just [28] an Upasaka" So, yes, if we send out just anagarikas, who look like bhikkhus, it'll let them off the hook. So you'll be not letting them off the hook. (laughter) So you can see there is quite a difficulty in this situation, for instance they might be a bit shocked if you go to the cinema, they'd certainly be shocked if I went to the cinema, unless it was a very definitely labelled 'Life of the Buddha' or some such (laughter) they would regard this as very Worldly and they wouldn't be able to understand why, being a spiritual person, I engaged in such a completely worldly activity. I mean they've no experience of the film as a medium of ideas or something of that sort. They've no conception of that. They'd not be too surprised if you want to see a film but they'd be quite a bit surprised if Lokamitra went in his yellow robes. So you see what you're up against, in a way.

KR: There seems to be a separation of the spiritual life from 'real' life, they seem to be making a hard and fast distinction between two completely different kind of lives.

S: So this preserves worldly life in its worldliness; it lets it off the hook.

KR: In fact they're not taking responsibility for their own actions.

S: ... (inaudible, I think) ...

KA: It's quite useful for somebody who really does just want to do nothing.

KM: It's almost like 'Brave New World' isn't it, where they take the difficult ones and put them on an island. They don't effect the main community so they let them be.

S: So what we've got to do on the contrary is to remain in society but insist on being different from society...

End of tape 1

Tape 2, side 1; day 1

S: The sangha should not be just a monastic body totally separate from society at large but a sort of model within society of what society at large or as a whole might or could [29] ultimately become. You find much the same sort of thing in the case of Christianity, that the society at large, though calling itself Christian, isn't expected to practise Christianity, that is relegated to the monasteries - if they have any monasteries - it's the monks who turn the other cheek, not the ordinary Christian. So the sort of problem that we'll be up against in India, socially speaking, is rather different from what we're up against here. In a way we're in a better position in England, you see what I mean? We are free to function within the society, its possible to be more of an individual within Western society. In the context of Indian society you've either got to be the complete family man or you've got to be completely a monk, in a strict and maybe rather narrow sort of way. Other possibilities virtually do not exist. You do find a few artists who are pretty free in their ways, in the big cities, but they're very few and far between. And frowned on by a lot of people. Anyway, this has all come out

of sugata. I think we'd better stop and have a cup of coffee... it's different, you know, India being such a vast country and all that. But I'm sure you'll find traces of these attitudes in at least some of the people that you meet, I mean when you go out to India and so on. You may originally find them in quite pleasant forms for instance you might be entertained to lunch so beautifully, and the women will come in and serve you so nicely, and then withdraw so gracefully, but that glosses it all over as it were. It takes some time to penetrate below the surface.

KR: I've just been thinking while you've been talking about India and everything, the strong traditional society in which people live there and also having heard that lecture a few days ago on the Axial Age, I was wondering about the arising of individuals and the strength and stability of societies. Would it be true that you'd be more likely to have people thinking for themselves, and the arousing of true individuals, in societies in which there is quite a lot of social change and upheaval going on?

S: Yes... you could say that for the ordinary person, you know who's not yet an individual, the ordinary group member, that traditional society is very good, he has his place, he knows exactly where he stands, he knows exactly what his duties are, he knows what's [30] expected of him. The stability, security... all his needs are fulfilled and looked after. But once people start developing as individuals they become quite a disruptive sort of influence, and very often we find that people start becoming individuals when two or more groups come into juxtaposition, into contact or even conflict, because then you have two absolutes. You see what I mean? formerly you were brought up within one particular group, only within one particular society, only within one particular tradition. That was it. You never thought that there was any other way of doing things, it was unthinkable. But then you come into contact with another kind of group, another kind of society, they do things completely differently, and that has an unsettling effect. And then you start thinking well, you know, people in this society do things in this way, people in that society do things in that way, ... a sort of relativism creeps in. Who is to decide which is right and which is wrong? The individual. That's the way it seems it develops. So therefore it seems that you get individuals developing (though this is not the only way or the only reason) when for instance you get say one group conquering other groups and creating an empire. So within this empire there's a great deal of mobility just because it is one empire, and you get people going from one part to another, in a way perhaps that they didn't before, maybe you get court officials going from one part to another. They see that in different parts of the empire people do things in different ways. Or maybe just travellers like Herodotus going around and seeing. There's so many different ways of living, so many different ways of doing the same thing. And then a certain relativism grows up, which can be a source of individuality in the true sense, but can also be just a source of social decay, and confusion. Especially for ordinary people, ordinary people just get bewildered.

KR: In fact aren't the two connected, that in the time of unrest there will be more responsibility thrown back on the individual and if the individual is able to respond, then he'll grow into a true individual, but if he's not he'll just find himself confused bewildered and unsettled, the same as the others.

[31]

S: And more likely to become unintelligently conservative; which means consciously conservative. Before he was sort of unconsciously conservative, he didn't see any other

possibility, but now he becomes as it were consciously conservative, violently so, this is what happened in the case of Socrates; why was he condemned to death? Why was he executed? He came up against these sort of forces. So at the present time in World history it is a time of intense relativism, and therefore perhaps for that reason more individuals being produced to use that term, but also stronger retreats into various kinds of groups, more and more abject submission to authority of various kinds. Intelligent people like T.S. Eliot becoming Anglo-Catholics, Chesterton and Belloc actually becoming Catholics; you get movements like Nazism, where the emphasis on the group is very strong, you get loyalty to the firm becoming a way of life. And then there's the Communist state which becomes the be-all and end-all of peoples lives.

KR: and ultra-left wing and ultra-right wing groups...

S: And all these different pseudo-religious groups, people totally dedicating themselves, totally committing ... well, one shouldn't use the word committing, but throwing themselves into, becoming totally group members of - things like Guru Maharaj and Ananda Marga. Not giving themselves, just giving themselves up. And in the midst of all that, just a few people struggling to be individuals; to make sense out of it all.

KD: So that the emerging group undermines the values of the traditional group...

S: You mean the spiritual group?

KD: Well, if the previous group was a spiritual group...

S: What happens is that the individuals emerge, at times of social change, and where it becomes evident that there's a great deal of relativism in man's life, then the stronger people as it were - truly stronger - are more likely to become individuals, and weaker people one could say are likely to retreat either into existing groups or join new authoritarian groups or the stronger weaker people start new groups... Some get their security from having followers. I mean that can also be a reaction. I remember that when Guru Maharaj had his big [32] celebration up in the Alexandra Palace, some of our friends went there. Kevin Brooks went there among others, and he and several others reported back to me that they noticed that the followers there, the premies, were definitely and distinctly of two kinds - a majority that were completely sheep-like and did everything that they were told - a minority that were clearly in charge and had what Kevin described as a completely Fascist authoritarian attitude; even an attitude of contempt towards the others, the way they ordered them about and told them what to do. So there were distinctly these two kinds of people. So these are both reactions to the same situation: you can react by weakly following or you can react by leading or trying to lead in a highly authoritarian fashion. And in both ways you get your security.

KM: and those leaders are the sort of dominant people that people sometimes call individuals.

S: Right, yes - dominant group members are often called individuals.

KR: But then the true individual will arise and start to teach, and start to teach in a time of disorder, they'll lead the way towards a new order.

S: Hopefully lead the way towards an entirely new social order...

KR: Which eventually, presumably, will break down in decay again.

S: Yes, the whole thing is cyclical. And therefore can never be done for once and for all as regards society at large, but needs to be done again and again and again. That is why, and this brings us to something which will come in here later, the Buddha's of the past and the Buddhas of the present and the Buddhas of the future and the Dharmas and the Sanghas. Anyway, let's go on... lokavidu, so the Buddha is also lokavidu. Loka is world, in Buddhism, especially in the Theravada, the Hinayana, there's this distinction or contrast between loka and lokutara, or lokiya and lokutarra. What we translate as the mundane and the transcendental. So loka is the world in the full sense. All conditioned existence and vidu is one who knows, in the sense of one who understands, who penetrates into. So the Buddha is the one who knows the world. The one who knows the [33] world, who knows conditioned existence through and through.

KA That's singular?

S Yes, that's singular. You could say the one who comprehends conditioned existence. So, one can look at this in two ways; first of all in the purely spiritual or transcendental way that the Buddha sees through conditioned existence - He sees that it is conditioned, He sees that it arises in dependence upon conditions, in dependence on causes even, He sees that it's contingent, He sees that it can't give permanent satisfaction, sees that it is impermanent, sees that it doesn't possess any ultimate reality of its own. So this is being a knower of the world, a knower of conditioned existence in the higher sense, but also one could say that the Buddha is a knower of the world in the sense that He knows the minds of people, He knows, He understands the conditions under which they live. He understands society. We certainly see this from the Pali texts, that the Buddha knew what was going on, He is quite well informed about things, even acquainted with the political situation, certainly with the social set-up, particularly as it concerned the caste-system.

KR That's really interesting, because there's an idea that the spiritual person leaves the world behind.

S Well yes, you see the Hindu will have this idea. The Hindu will be a bit shocked if he sees, for instance, a monk reading a newspaper. Now clearly, in a sense, a monk ought not to occupy himself too much with newspapers, you can be a newspaper addict, but you can't lay it down as a hard and fast rule that a monk - i.e. a completely spiritual person, should never read a newspaper, because that's sort of worldly, and he should have nothing to do with anything worldly. This is the reasoning, but in a way it's a false reasoning assuming that yes, he is a spiritual person, his motivation is spiritual, he may need if he is working in the world to know what is going on, he may need to inform himself, he may need therefore to read newspapers. Again it's too easy to say "well worldly people read newspapers, spiritual people don't". If you're a spiritual person you mustn't read a newspaper... or "He's reading a newspaper, can't be a spiritual person". That's all too easy. Too simplistic, too [34] absolutist. But whether it's a question of reading the newspaper or in any other way, you need to know the world, it's in the world that you're operating. Incidentally, one could mention here and maybe quarrel with, this expression of giving up the world. I mean you hear this again in India and in the West too, that the monk gives up the world, as though he could in fact find some vantage point entirely outside it, and have nothing to do with it. But that is not the case at all. He's in the world as much as anybody else, but in a different way, or tries to be in it in a different way. So again

you see this attempt to shunt off the spiritual person; to make him socially irrelevant. In a sense yes, he is not in the world, or he's not of the world but he is in it. So in a way orthodox Hinduism tries to make Buddhism or even some of its own spiritual traditions socially irrelevant. And this is one of the ways in which it does this, the holy man, the spiritual man, has nothing to do with worldly things. Its true that he doesn't in a worldly way, but this sort of philosophy shouldn't be used just to try and neutralize its influence on the existing society. Just like in the Middle Ages, a monk might come to a king and expostulate with him that he was being unjust; that as a Christian monarch he ought to be more just and more compassionate to his subjects, and what would the king usually say? "You get back to your monastery; you get on with your prayers. That's your job, not to tell me how to govern the country. You go and pray for me - for the country." So it's only too easy for anyone who is a bit revolutionary to be neutralised. You could say in the west the revolutionary is neutralised by being incorporated into the establishment, which happens pretty quickly as soon as he becomes successful - I mean look at the Beatles for instance, you see it time and time again. In India they do it more by making you socially irrelevant, putting you on a pedestal, so high (laughter) that you have no influence. They say things like "Oh, you are so pure, you couldn't possibly understand how bad and how wicked we are. (laughter) It's useless to give us advice." "We're just incapable of following, just in your pure compassion, just pray for us and leave us to our own wicked misery." (laughter)

KA: Please!! (laughter)

[35]

S: We are only worldly people, we're not spiritual people, we admit it we acknowledge it; we're open, we're humble... (laughter). So the Buddha is a knower of the world both spiritually and in a more mundane sense. And then anuttaro purisa-damma-sarati. The sarati should be sarathi, at the end. Sarathi is charioteer, ratha is chariot, saratha, the man who goes with the chariot; the charioteer. Charioteer in the sense of leader or guide. So the Buddha is the charioteer, the leader or guide, for purissa, for the man or men, damma, who... what shall we say? It's usually translated "who wish to be controlled", it's not quite like that, its more like for men of control, yes, you could say men who want to control themselves, men who want to be controlled. He is the charioteer or the guide or the shower of the way, the leader, for those who wish to be controlled.

KD : I got a bit lost there, what did you say sarati was?

S: Charioteer... that's the literal meaning, but the real meaning is more like guide or leader or shower of the way.

KR: When you say men who want to be controlled, you mean men who want to control themselves...

S: Yes. who want to be shown how to control themselves. This raises the whole question of the meaning of control. It could be translated as restraint, the charioteer, the leader or guide for men who wish to restrain themselves. It being suggested that the energies are going say in the wrong direction and they need to be redirected. For instance, in the Dhammapada the Buddha says that just as the fletcher shapes the arrow, just as the irrigator leads the water through the water channels, so the wise man controls - and I think it's the same word here - his own mind. So it's more a conception of a natural force, or a natural energy which needs to

be properly directed more than something that needs to be repressed or dammed up as it were. You could even render it... a guide for those who wish to direct their energies properly; to become integrated. And then there's the epithet anuttaro. Anuttaro means the highest or best or supreme. The Buddha is the highest or best or supreme guide for those who wish to restrain themselves or to direct their energies in the right way. Sometimes anuttaro is taken as a separate epithet, not as an adjective of purissa-damma-sarathi. In which case it's simply "the Buddha is the highest" the highest kind of being being the fully enlightened, liberated individual. In Buddhism there is this idea of control or restraint or at least redirection of energies but this in a way raises quite a considerable question, because people think of control [36] or restraint so much usually in terms of repression that they're against the idea of any control or restraint at all. So I think that it's quite important to understand this properly.

KA: Harmonization...

S: Perhaps it's not, perhaps that's glossing it over a bit, maybe it's a question of recognizing that sometimes within oneself there are impulses or things that you'd really like to do that you just have to check. You see what I mean? That you can't always give vent to your feelings or impulses. Supposing for instance that you get very angry and that you just want to lash out at somebody, you have to check that. That's not to say that you need to repress the feeling of anger, repress in the technical psycho-analytical sense, it's not to say that you should refuse to acknowledge that the feeling is there, but you may well have to check or control the expression. But partly as the result of a popularized and misunderstood Freudianism sometimes people speak and think as though you just have to let everything hang out in the full and literal sense. Including lash out, and that clearly is not desirable.

KR: I suppose that the reason for that is that we've been so blocked and repressed that sometimes actually expressing it all is the first step towards redirecting energies.

S: Even so you have to be aware of other people, and consider them, because why should they have to pay the price of your self-expression or your self-development even. So control has come to be rather a dirty word in some circles. In the same way, in other circles, control is regarded with too much favour. So it's as though people are split, some wanting control in a highly authoritarian rigid repressive way and others not recognizing the need for any kind of control at all, even objective self-control. But one does need to exercise control. One needs to deflect one's energies sometimes from a certain object on to another.

And then the Buddha is 'satta deva manusanan'. Satta is teacher, even guru, deva manusanan [37] is 'of gods and men'. So the Buddha is described as the teacher of gods and men. Now how is one to take that? Well it clearly hinges on what is meant by god here... Deva. So what is meant by god here? Devas appear in Buddhist texts, don't they, devas appear repeatedly. A deva appears at the beginning of the Mangala Sutta. So what is a deva or devata?

KM: A being which inhabits a world which is correlative of a more positive state of consciousness.

S: But what is that world essentially? For instance is it lokia or is it lokuttara? Is it conditioned or is it unconditioned?

KL: It's unconditioned.

S: What could one therefore say about the deva?

KA: Being of refined conditioning.

S: Being of refined conditioning. So is a being of refined conditioning at the same time an Enlightened being? No. So does a being of refined conditioning or a deva need the teaching or not?

Omnes: Yes he does.

S: Yes he does.

KA: Could you say that he is closer to Enlightenment?

S: Well in a sense closer, in a sense further away. He's closer in the sense that his conditioning is more refined, but he's further away in the sense that his conditioning is very refined. (laughter). In a sense nearer, but more difficult to break through. Do that's the mythological explanation of the Buddha being the teacher of gods and men. That conditioned existence or the sphere of sentient existence, extends further, according to Buddhist tradition, than the world of modern science. I mean devas don't appear in accounts of anthropology or anything of that kind. So what it means is that the Buddha the Enlightened one is the teacher, the guide or the shower of the way for all forms [38] of sentient conditioned existence, whether lower or higher, grosser or more refined, and the devas, the gods of popular mythology, are regarded as coming in the latter category, and therefore as being in need of teaching. So this one could say was a way in which Buddhism asserted its superiority over the popular cults, by making even the objects of these cults, the devas, into humble disciples of the Buddha. One could look at it also in another way. One could look at it more sort of psychologically, even in strictly Jungian terms. Looking at it in that sort of way what is a deva? Looking at in a non-mythological sort of way, looking at it in a psychological, archetypal way, what is a deva?

KA: One could see it as representing the higher aspect of one's own being.

S: Yes, one's own conditioned being. So if one was to do that then in what sense would the Buddha be the teacher of gods and men?

KA: Taking you beyond even that.

S: Taking you beyond even that but also more than that, one could say that the deva is seen as being out there, the deva of mythology, but in this sense, the sort of Jungian sense, the deva is represented as being in here. So the Buddha is the teacher of gods and men also in the sense that he enables one to see that divinities which one formerly projected are in fact aspects of ones own, possibly higher consciousness, and in that way enables one to withdraw the projection. Not to see the deva out there but to experience it in here, and in this way to become more integrated. So then Buddhho. we've already dealt with that one, he is the Enlightened one and also the Bhagavan, it a recapitulation of what came at the beginning. So 'Iti piso bhagavan arahat ... buddho bhagavati' ti is an abbreviation for iti - thus. He is like that. Then Buddhham jivata pariyantam saranam gacchami. Saranam gacchami - for refuge I go. Buddhham , to the Buddha, jivata pariyantam until the end of life, or for the whole of my

life, or throughout my life, I go to the Buddha for refuge. So why do you think the refuge follows on that listing of the epithets of the Buddha? It's because you must know what you're going for refuge to, at least to some extent. It's the Buddha in that sense, not a being who created the world or anything of that [39] kind. This is the Buddha, as described here, to whom one is going for refuge. And why do you think it says here explicitly until the end of life? For my whole life.

KD: It's not something you do just once. Its more dynamic.

S: Well in a sense it's something that you do just once, once and for all, but again not because it's something that you do continuously, continuously as well as continually.

KA : Is going for refuge adopting a standard?

S: That applies more maybe to the going for refuge to the Dharma. But if you look at going for refuge as commitment, you know a commitment which is not for life is hardly a commitment. So if you really commit yourself there's a sort of quality of absoluteness about it. You can't see beyond this life, so in practical terms it means you commit yourself for life. If for instance you really now do believe it for life. It may be that in practice or in fact that you do change your mind later on and see things differently, but when you see it now you see it so totally that as far as you're concerned that's it, that's for good, that's for keeps. That's for the whole of your life. So commitment, being of that total and absolute nature, cannot but be for life, or beyond if you see beyond. So therefore it says, to the Buddha I go for refuge to the end of my life. Not just today or tomorrow.

KM: So that even if you do change your mind it doesn't change the fact that when you went for refuge you saw it in that way.

S: Yes, it's like when you get married, you say, according to the Church of England service, until death us do part, and that is genuinely your intention at the time, but it may not work out like that for one reason or another, but that is the intention, or the normative intention. All right then, and then there are the little verses. The previous lines are all in prose, but these are in verse;

Ye ca buddha atita ca  
Ye ca Buddha anagata  
Pacappa ca ye Buddha  
Aham vandami sabaddha

[40]

Which means;

To the Buddhas of the past, of the time that has gone, To the Buddhas of the future, or the Buddhas of the time that has not come, To the Buddhas that are now, not necessarily now in the sense of this minute or this day, but this particular kalpa, this particular world period, aham - I, vandami salute, sabadda - always. I ever salute the Buddha of the past, the present and the future.

So this brings in this question of cycles, that a Buddha's work is never done for once and for all, a Buddha arises, an individual arises, a true individual, a perfect individual, he gathers around him a number of other individuals, they create, they set-up a spiritual community, a sangha, and this eventually has an influence on the whole of society. Under favourable conditions the whole of society may become virtually a sangha, but then the process of corruption sets in. Success leads to degeneration, the quality of people joining, as it were, deteriorates, so your spiritual community becomes less a community of individuals. To the extent that they're not individuals the community becomes more of a group, then group pulls begin operating, then the whole society sinks. So eventually you end up just like another group, and again, within that group, another individual has to arise, and that is the next Buddha, and thus the process goes on. Buddhism sees no final victory in this way, final victory for the individual, yes; but not final victory for society.

KA : So that's how it treads the path between absolutism and nihilism, because you can be very nihilistic and say look, it's just going to collapse, going to fall anyway, why should we bother; or, we're going to do it we're going to save mankind for ever.

S: But not mankind as a collective entity, because mankind is continually being renewed or replenished, but you can go on saving, as it were, individuals indefinitely, more and more individuals.

KR: Each time a few might get out.

S: Yes, because the group or the society is only a collective term. You might say for instance, supposing there's a teacher, and he's teaching the fourth form, well he might say what's the use of my work? The fourth form is always the fourth form, (laughter) it [41] never comes to anything. But that's not the point, individuals from the fourth form go on to the fifth form, that's the point, though the fourth form, in a sense, is always with you and always there, however brilliant the students of this year, however well they go sailing up into the fifth form, the beginning of next term, another crop of fourth formers. You might think that your time was being wasted, because the fourth form is always there, but the fourth form in that sense is only an abstraction, it's not an actual existing entity. So in the same way the work of the Bodhisattva is never finished, because fresh unenlightened individuals are always being produced. But then there's optimism at the same time because more and more of those unenlightened individuals are becoming enlightened individuals. So there's always the need for another Buddha once the previous spiritual community has become a group, and all knowledge of the path to true individuality has been lost. Another individual has to find it out all over again. And then communicate it to other people.

KM: But even during the period of influence of one Buddha there's surges of the spiritual community being stronger and then weaker and then stronger and so on.

S: Oh yes, and you find this in different areas, say if you study the history of Buddhist China, Buddhism rose and fell there so many times, now it's fallen. It may arise again, there may be some great teacher arise in China. Historical Buddhism has not reached the end of the road yet by any means, though at present it's very much on retreat, it's been virtually wiped out in Mongolia, Tibet, large areas of China, now Laos, Cambodia. This is all within my lifetime, maybe within your lifetime this has happened. So Buddhism has suffered great set-backs, even since the FWBO was founded, it's suffered set-backs in Vietnam, in Cambodia and

Laos.

KR: Is there still Buddhism in Vietnam?

S: Its very difficult to say, but there's a Communist regime now in control that is completely anti-religious. You can't wipe it out over-night of course. I've got many [42] friends there, Vietnamese monks, I don't know what's happened to them. I don't know what's happened to the Pahn Han Buddhist University which they started, some of them, the rector of which was a very good old friend of mine. A Vietnamese Buddhist monk. They had 2,000 students, many of them monks. I've no news at all what's happened to them. I had a standing invitation there. When it started they wanted me to join it. So I know nothing of what's going on now. So this is the way it goes. Buddhism says expect nothing else - this is the world! It goes up it comes down. No permanent kingdom of heaven on Earth. Even Buddhism in it's organizational or institutional form will not last forever. But there's constant possibility of renewal.

KA: The principle is eternal?

S: Buddhism wouldn't even say that. Well there are two permanent possibilities - you go up or you go down. (laughter) To be reactive or to be creative. The individual or the person who could be an individual, has to chose each time.

Lunch break

DAY 1, TAPE 2 Side 2.

S: Right, now we come on to the characteristics of the Dharma. Right, svakhato ... no, we didn't do the second verse did we? That's quite simple really - natti me saranam anam - for me there is no other refuge Buddhho me saranam varam - the Buddha is for me the supreme refuge, etena sacca vacena - by the power of this truth, hotu me jayamangalam - for me may there be an auspicious celebration. In other words - by the power of this truth, for me may there be good luck. May all be well with me, something like that.

KR: What does jaya mean?

S: Jaya is more like victory or celebration or the celebration that follows a victory. The Buddha's birthday is called Buddha-jayanti - celebration. It means something uprising, upsurging - a celebration. The only thing that really needs comment here is etena sacca vajjena by the power of this truth. It's a common Indian belief that the utterance of truth has a [43] certain power or force, and can even bring about results in the objective world. This would be regarded nowadays as completely unscientific if taken literally, but what it does suggest is that the utterance of truth, something which you say with your whole being, which is true and which you utterly believe, this is a very powerful thing. You get the idea, you know when you really do speak the truth in the full sense (of the word) there's a certain weight behind your words, there is a power behind your words, and traditionally in India that is expressed in the belief that that power is even an objective, almost physical power which can bring about events, changes, in the course of nature. Which can almost work miracles, as it were. But perhaps that's just a sort of symbolical way of emphasizing or underlining the power, certainly the psychological and spiritual power which attaches to the utterance of the

truth. So, by virtue of this truth, for me may there be an auspicious victory or an auspicious celebration. Then svakhato bhagavata Dhammo - so Dhammo Dhamma is the Teaching and this is the Dhammavandana, the word dhamma has got a number of different meanings, and this is quite important to understand. Dhamma can mean for instance a quality or attribute, dhamma can mean an idea, in the sense of an object of the mind, dhamma can mean a law, the course or natural order of things, dhamma can mean cause, dhamma can also mean the ultimate truth or reality of things, and it can mean the Teaching. So here it's the latter two which are more relevant. The Dhamma as an expression in words, as a teaching, of the ultimate reality of things. When we speak in terms of terms of the Buddha dhamma or the Buddha dharma it means the expression, by the Buddha, in words, of His realization of the ultimate truth or ultimate reality of things, or his experience of the workings of the universal spiritual law or something like that. So Dhammo has got this double meaning. Dhamma as the Buddha's actual teaching, there's Dhamma as truth or reality, and then there's both together, the Dhamma as the Buddha's teaching of, His expression of or communication of, His experience of the ultimate reality of things. It's this which is meant here, so its svakhato bhagavata Dhammo. First of all bhagavata [44] Dhammo - the Dhamma of the Blessed One; the commentators often mention here that this is said, that the Dhamma is the Dhamma of the Blessed One, that is to say of the Buddha, it is not any other person's Dhamma, it is not any other teacher's teaching, it is the Dhamma which has issued as it were from the mind, or the spiritual realization, of a Buddha, a perfectly enlightened one, and not something which has been fabricated intellectually or put together in an eclectic manner from sources, and it belongs to the Buddha; it has not been discovered or it has not been revealed or experienced in its fullness by anybody else. I mean not before Him at least in this present world period. So it is the Dhamma which belongs to the Buddha, it is the Buddha's Dhamma. So therefore bhagavata Dhamma. So svakhato, that Dhamma which belongs to the Buddha is svakhato - which means well-uttered, well-expressed or even well-communicated. So this is quite important that the Dhamma of the Buddha, or it's quite important that the Dhamma is not only the Dhamma of the Buddha, but it is well-communicated. Sometimes it's translated well-expounded, which is a bit too formal in a way, but that the Buddha has put it across properly. The Buddha has fully communicated whatever it was necessary for the disciples to know. He has communicated it in various ways, sometimes by means of rational analysis, sometimes by means of exhortation, sometimes with the help of parables or myths or stories, so its been fully and completely and adequately communicated or expressed. So well taught. Sometimes it's translated as well taught, but really it's well uttered or well expressed or well spoken. I've translated it as well-communicated, I think this gives more the essence of the meaning. So svakhato bhagavata Dhammo sandittiko. Sandittiko means, it's usually translated as with immediate fruit, but it really means 'seen at once', 'immediate', that is to say if you practice it, if you put it into operation, you see the results immediately, like if you practice the metta bhavana, you don't have to wait until you die to experience the result, you experience the result immediately, in the form of a change in your own mental state, a change in your own emotional state, so the result is immediately perceptible, so this is what is meant by sandittiko. [45] Therefore it does not depend upon faith, faith in the sense of blind belief. You practice according to the teaching, and you experience the results in accordance with your practice. And therefore you see for yourself that it does work. So there's no need for blind belief there's no place for that. So it is sandittiko - immediate is the usual translation. Giving an immediate result. So supposing that somebody said to you "Ah, but we don't get immediate results." It may be somebody who meditates for weeks, months on end, nothing happens. What do you say then?

KR: That's just what I was thinking actually. (laughter)

S: So what would you say?

KA: You can't get immediate results, in a way, but I'm not sure how you can not get immediate results, because you're coming in touch with whatever it is that's blocking you.

S: Yes, right.

KM: Perhaps they're just not the results you were expecting.

S: Or perhaps sometimes you do sort of block off a result because you expect some other kind of result. You know, usually when people meditate, what do they think constitutes success? I mean a good meditation? They should feel really blissful, carried away, and be really immersed and float off. They think this means it's a good meditation. Well in a sense yes that's right, but this result you may not get immediately, but some result you will get immediately, even if it means simply that you're coming up against your own blockages. There also you're getting something. Something is happening, something is being stirred up. But I think if you were a normal, healthy, relatively integrated person, the first time that you sat and meditated you would get some tangible result. And therefore you would know that it worked. But usually the blockages or hindrances, problems or difficulties, they arise subsequently when you start getting more deeply stirred up due to the fact that the meditation is beginning to take real effect. So, I think I mentioned this before, that quite a few people find, at least they did in the old days, that their first meditation [46] was their best. For a long time. Because also they're not anticipating anything, they don't know what's going to happen. So their minds are completely open; but if they do well and have a certain experience, then next time, instead of really meditating, instead of really concentrating, they start looking for or trying to engineer the occurrence of that particular experience. So to that extent they're not really concentrating, not really meditating. It can be that you do have the same experience, as it were, again and again and again, if you really go after it because you've got a sort of attachment to it or you'd like to have it for egoistic reasons, then the chances are that you won't have that. You won't gain it, you won't experience it.

KR: So what's the remedy for that?

S: Well the remedy is to approach each sitting or each session, with a completely new mind. I mean not think in terms of doing something again. Think in terms of just doing it. As it were for just this once. Because even though you do it every day, every day is different, you yourself are a different person when you sit, the atmosphere is different, the climate is different, the day ahead is going to be different, you're in a different kind of mental state, a different kind of mood and so how can you have exactly the same kind of experience, how can you have exactly the same meditation? It may be in the same general line of development, but it won't be a duplicate of yesterday's meditation however good.

[47]

KA: It would be quite an exciting approach to sit down and say "What's going to happen today?"

S: Yes, right. But in a way, that should be one's approach to everything, to life, to other

people, otherwise you think that you know and you anticipate and you act in accordance with your anticipations, and in that way you get things firmly on to a definite track the same old tramlines as it were, and of course very often it happens that yes, people do behave in the same way, broadly speaking, again and again, so in your relationships with them you get into a way of behaving in the same old way, again and again. You can't help that with people who are essentially reactive and oneself, to the extent that one's reactive, but one has to resist it all the time, you resist it partly by being open all the time to things being new or a little different or even quite different. That you're not in fact doing the same old thing over again, however similar or however much the same it may appear to be. So like when you meet your father, he may be the same dreary old father, and he may be expressing the same sentiments that you've heard a hundred times before, but you should not anticipate that, it may be that this time he'll be a bit different. But he's less likely to be different if you anticipate his not being different. And that's the same in every kind of situation. Or if you say to somebody "Oh, I know what you're going to say...", well even if the situation isn't in fact like that you'll make it like that, you'll make it boring and repetitive, so one should always try to see well what is actually happening now? How is the person now? What is the situation now? What is my experience now? And forget about yesterday, forget about tomorrow, what is it like now? You could say as a general rule that the more reactive a person, the more predictable he is. The less reactive the more creative the person is, the less predictable he is. But once a creative person has done something, no matter how unpredictable it is, in retrospect you can see that it is in character. You see what I mean? Supposing, take the example of creative work, say creative writing suppose somebody brings out a new book, a book of poems or a new novel, you could not [48] have anticipated that that is what he would do, that that is what he would bring out, you know, assuming him to be a really creative person, but once he's brought it out then you can see its connection with all his previous work.

KA: (Inaudible)

S: Yes, but you yourself, to the extent that you were not a creative person, or at least not the same creative person that he is, could not have anticipated or predicted it from his previous work, however well you knew it. I mean who that knew Ibsen up to his thirty-sixth year could have predicted that he'd write *Brand*? Unpredictable. Apparently Shakespeare wrote things in a very odd sequence indeed. According to something I was reading recently, after the *Tempest* he wrote, or collaborated in the writing of the *Two Noble Kinsmen*, it doesn't seem to follow on at all. So as a general rule one can say that the more reactive a person is the more predictable. The less reactive, the more creative, the less predictable. But even the reactive person isn't exactly the same every time he doesn't react in exactly the same way every time, so one ought to be open to that slight difference even as well. Otherwise if you anticipate you are yourself being reactive because you are going on the past and that is the essence of reactivity, that it's completely determined by the past, whereas the creative is not determined by the past, not ruled by the past, it opens up an entirely new perspective, an entirely new vista. So that's *sandittiko*, and then *akalikko*, the Dhamma is *akalikko* - *akalikko* means literally just timeless, free from time, out of time. So what does that mean do you think? that the Dhamma is timeless? It means that in principle it's never out of date. Sometimes the Dhamma is called *samatama* or *sanantana* which means eternal, for instance in the *Dhammapada* there is a verse:

...

Which means;

Here in this world hatred never ceases by hatred  
Hatred ceases only by non-hatred

This is an (or the) sanatana Dhamma, the you could translate it the eternal [49] law, or permanently valid principle. It's not effected by time whether it's a thousand years ago or whether it's now, or in a thousand years time, it will always be true as long as there are human or sentient beings, with human nature as we know them, that hatred will never cease by hatred, it will cease only by its opposite, which is non-hatred or metta. So here this is an eternal law, its not a law which changes from time to time. So in the same way the law of conditionality you know is an eternal law. So the Dhamma is eternal in this sense, it's a truth that remains true irrespective of particular instances or circumstances. It's as valid now as it was say in the Buddhas time. There are certain things that have got mixed up with the Dhamma historically, which were valid then, useful then, but not valid now, not useful now, that's a different matter. But the basic fundamental principles remain eternally true and eternally valid. Then ehipassiko. Ehi, ehi simply means come, passiko means see. It's the Dhamma which has the nature of come and see, in other words not to be taken on trust in the sense of blind belief, but which you have to come and see for yourself. And this is an adjective of Dhamma - the ehipassiko Dhamma, the come and see Dhamma. This goes down very well with the ex-Untouchables by the way, they're very much opposed to what they call blind-belief and they tend to equate this sort of attitude with pure rationalism, which is rather unfortunate, but certainly Buddhism has this emphasis of coming and seeing for yourself. I was explaining this or talking about this in Helsinki and I said it's like for instance when you know somebody and they've got maybe a bit interested in the FWBO they might have been along to the centre. And they ask you well what's it like? What do you do? What's the atmosphere like? What sort of people...? You say perhaps well I can't really tell you, you just have to come and see for yourself, come experience for yourself. So come and see. Sometimes we want to know all about it whilst remaining as far away from it as we possibly can. They don't want to come and see they just want to stay away and hear. (laughter) Write a book about it. Telling the world what it's really like. So it's the ehipassiko Dhamma. The Dhamma which says come and see for yourself. Don't take anything on trust, even from the Buddha.

[50]

KR: This is what you've translated as "... of the nature of a personal invitation..."

S: That's right, which is a bit of a paraphrase, but it's much more direct and idiomatic in Pali: Ehi, passiko. In the Buddha's day the first ordinations of monks (as we call them now unfortunately) were when the Buddha said " Ehi Bhikkhu", or "Ehi Bikkhere". "Monk, come", and that made him a monk. (laughter) Yes, the first ordinations were conducted in that way by the Buddha. So no apparatus of ordination in the more ceremonial sense such as there is now. Somebody came along to the Buddha, heard what the Buddha had to say, was impressed by that, the Buddha saw that he was ready, so he said 'Come', Ehi. 'Ehi Bikkhere', by calling him bikkhere, monk; addressing him as monk, he made him one. It's a form of sacca vajjena - the power of truth as it were. He saw that he was a monk so He called him monk and formally made him one. There was no going for refuge and taking the precepts in the beginning. Even for what are now called Bhikkhus there was just that. That's called the 'Ehi Bikkhere upasampata' - the ordination by the Buddha's utterance 'Come Bhikkhu'. This translates into

English as 'Come, O monk' which is a bit stilted, it's very forcibly put - Ehi Bikkhere - Come Monk. And then you're ordained. You're in the Sangha then. So opaniyiko... nayati is to lead. Opanayiko is leading forward or leading onward, or its sometimes translated progressive. The Dhamma is of such a nature that it leads you on or leads you forward step by step and stage by stage, it is progressive. You could even say it is evolutionary, it is developmental, it is a path of regular steps, eventually at least. In Helsinki we talked quite a bit about regular steps, and I made the point that in the FWBO everything, to begin with at least, was irregular, and that you gradually got on to the path of regular steps. The Path of Regular Steps meaning you perfect an earlier stage before you start developing a later stage. But too many people as it were start in the middle. But by practice they learn that they can't perfect that middle stage while the earlier stage is remaining imperfect, so they go back a bit and develop that more and then come forward again, so from the path of irregular steps they [51] get on to the path of regular steps. I think the question arose in connection originally with ordination. I mentioned that someone in England had said on the first anniversary of his ordination that on that day he felt that he was ready for ordination. So somebody in Finland said that she felt the same, an order member, they were a bit surprised or a bit puzzled by this, so I said this is the example of the path of irregular steps. In a sense, though only in a sense, you are ordained when you are not ready for ordination. But after being ordained, and maybe only after being ordained, you become ready for ordination, so you pass from the path of irregular steps to the path of regular steps. So I said in that sense everybody is ordained irregularly, everything in the FWBO is irregular, that being the nature of the situation now, because people know, mentally know, far more than they are able to practise, so mentally they're way ahead. Maybe they're trying to practise some advanced form of Zen meditation before they've really learned to concentrate. Or trying to get into the Tantra or something like that. So all right, you can't stop them doing that but if they are really into it and if they're sincere, after a while they realize that they're only getting so far, something is getting in the way, so they have to come back and make their foundation firm and then again they can go forward more successfully. So from the path of irregular steps you go forward to the path of regular steps. Hardly anybody goes on the path of regular steps, because people know too much just intellectually, they think they've left all that behind, because they're on those more advanced steps just mentally. They've read about them, they know about them. It's only very simple people who have not read about Buddhism and who don't know anything about it just mentally who can tread the path of regular steps. I pointed out that say in the old days you didn't get hold of books on Buddhism or read them and in that way become interested. You saw some Bhikkhus living as bhikkhus, you saw a group of the Buddha's followers living in accordance with his teaching and you were attracted by that, you wanted to join them, so you went along and presented yourself and you weren't given [52] a book on Buddhism to read, you were just given work to do. Sweep the monastery compound something like that, or start cooking. You might be given a simple meditation, and when you'd done those things really well, you'd be given the next thing to do. So the teacher would give you only what you were able and willing to practise at that particular time. When you'd done it, he'd give you something else to do, something else to practise, and that way you'd go through the path of regular steps. But that's no longer possible because you can read all about the goal and all about what it's like when you get there before you've even taken the first step. So every body necessarily these days, at least in the West, with very very few exceptions, is on the path of irregular steps. Everything is irregular. In a way they're doing everything wrong, in away, but that's the way it has to be. But from the path of irregular steps, if you really are making an effort, and it is a path of irregular steps, you get on to the path of regular steps, and then you do make more solid progress. You could say that some schools carry this to an extreme, almost sort of deliberately. You start off by being

Enlightened, or thinking that you're Enlightened, and you gradually have to catch up with yourself. (Laughter). Like some people might start to meditate, without giving up parties or alcohol, getting a bit drunk at the weekend, and they start meditating. Fair enough. In the old days you would be told "Stop going to parties, give up alcohol, observe the precepts strictly, then you can start meditating. You can't tell that to people now. So all right. You let them start meditating before they've even thought of observing the precepts, and maybe they get a bit into it, but they find they can't get any further, but they'd like to get further, they'd like to get more deeply into it. So they think well what's holding me up? Maybe they ask you, and you say well it's the rest of your life which is pulling in the other direction, so you just have to start sorting things out a bit, lead a quieter life. Don't go to so many parties, don't get drunk, just take a little drink every now and then. Then they find yes, their meditation's going better, and in this way they [53] get a bit more on to the path of regular steps. That's how it works. So the Dharma is progressive it's constantly leading forward, if it doesn't lead you forward it isn't the Dharma. At least not for you, its not working for you in the right way. Maybe because you're taking it in the wrong way or maybe because you haven't got on to or into that aspect of the Dharma which is suited to you, suited to your needs, suited to your temperament. But it should be leading you forward all the time. Every year at least, or every few months there should be some quite discernible progress. Maybe you can't see it yourself, well after all you see yourself every day, every minute, but at least it should be perceptible to those who see you from time to time.

KR: If you're not changing, it's not the Dharma you're practising.

S: Ah... changing is not enough, it's got to be a change for the better.(Laughter). You could switch from beer on to whiskey. It would be a change, (laughter) but it wouldn't exactly be a change for the better, or you could switch from blondes to brunettes. It's a change, but not a change for the better in the spiritual sense. (laughter). So one of the essential characteristics of the Dharma is that it is progressive. It's of such a nature that if you practice it cannot but lead you forward to higher and ever higher levels of being and consciousness.

KR: Well that's what it is really, its what moves you forward.

S: Yes, its like a stream into which you get and which carries you forward if you allow it to. A little word of warning, the ex-Untouchables and Hindu intellectuals in India sympathetic to Buddhism, like to think of it as progressive in the modern sense, that Buddhism is progressive and we're progressive, that is we are for material improvement and that kind of thing. Well clearly one must distinguish that kind of progress from this kind of progress.

KM. That's just change.

S: That's just change. It may be a necessary change, I mean we should make it clear that we're not against material improvement as such, but we certainly don't confuse that with the [54] progressive movement of the Dharma itself. Then paccatam veditabo venuhitti. Paccatam means personally; veditabo - to be known; venuhitti - by those who are wise, by those who understand. So the Dharma is of such a nature that it should be known or understood personally by the wise. That is to say understood from one's own actual experiences not from the testimony of another.

KD: Sorry, what was that again?

S: Paccatam - personally; vedittabo - to be known; venuhitti - by the wise. Sometimes it's translated "To be experienced personally by the wise, each one for himself. As regards the Dharma, another's experience is no substitute for your own. The Dharma is essentially something which you must experience for yourself. That is to say if you are wise. It's something which only the wise can experience. Otherwise it isn't the Dharma. It isn't the Dharma really if it's only hearsay so far as you are concerned.

KR: Something which I have noticed is that earlier on when I came along and had Kalayana Mitras and so on, I'd take quite a few things on trust which fairly recently I've been thinking out for myself, and usually agreeing with what I was told or picked up. It's almost as though sometimes you have to take things on trust until you find out for yourself.

S: You do, but you take them on trust provisionally, and subject to your own future investigation. You don't take them on trust absolutely and that ends the matter, you are told, you believe and that's all there is to it. And there are of course these three levels of wisdom - prajna - which are quite important. I've touched on them several times. That is to say the sutta maya panna - these are the Pali terms - The chinta maya panna, and the bhavana maya panna. The sutta maya panna means the understanding that you get just by hearing, here hearing means learning. You read a book say about Buddhism, you understand what the book says, you understand the Buddha's teaching from that exposition. So this is called the wisdom that comes from learning. This is quite valid. This is what you have to do first, [55] you have to hear, you have to be open, you have to hear what the Dharma has to say. But then comes the second stage, the chinta maya panna - chinta means thinking or reflecting, you turn it over in your mind, and try to understand it for yourself, as it were intellectually. The sutta maya panna, the understanding by hearing is... you understand what has actually been said, but when you turn it over in your mind, it's more like you understand the why and the wherefore of what has been said. The first is a sort of formal understanding, the second is a more substantial understanding. The first consists simply in a sense of what has been said, in the sense that the meaning is clear to you, what has been stated is intelligible to you, it makes sense, its internally consistent. But then in the case of chinta maya panna you reflect upon that and you understand it and work it out for yourself, intellectually. Then bhavana maya panna is when you practice and meditate and actually experience the truth of what formally you had heard about and understood or reflected upon intellectually. But all these stages have to be gone through - you first hear, then you reflect, then you experience for yourself. So in a sense when you hear, you take on trust that what has been stated is correct, but then you try and understand it for yourself, then you try to experience it for yourself and then you know well yes, it is so. What I heard, what I understood was so, it was correct. You don't start with an initial scepticism. You start with acceptance but then you examine for yourself and reflect on it and try to make it an experience for yourself. Especially through meditation. So these are the attributes of the Dharma, that it is well-communicated, that it is the special Dharma, as it were, of the Buddha who is the Enlightened One, that its fruits, of one kind or another, are immediate, it is timeless, it is eternally valid, that it invites one to come and see for oneself, that it is progressive leading one on to higher stages or levels of experience, and that it is to be personally experienced by the wise, each one for himself. And therefore in that Dharma, as long as life lasts, you take refuge, or to that Dharma, as long as life lasts, we go for refuge.

[56]

And so the verses are the same as before, with Dhamma taking the place of Buddha. To all the Dhammas of the past, To all the Dharmas of the present, to all the Dharmas of the future,

we ever pay our salutations or I ever pay my salutation. For me there is no other refuge except the Dharma which is my highest refuge. By virtue of this truth may there be joyous victory. I think we'll leave it there for today because the Sangha Vandana requires quite a bit of explanation...

End of day one.

[57]

Day 2. Tape 3, side 1:

S: All right; Supatipanno bhagavato savakasangho... So here the characteristics of the Sangha are described. Sangha of course means as we would say spiritual community. This is another of those words which has a general popular meaning in modern Indian languages and you have to be very careful about that. There is sang which means an association or a society - its got no particularly spiritual connotations, it's just a particular kind of group. So here the sangha is characterized as the savakasangha. One can look at this in two different ways. If one looks at it in terms of the fully developed Buddhist doctrine then it's the community of sravakas - that is to say followers of the Hinayana - as distinct from the Bodhisattvas but that later sort of doctrinal distinction, I think doesn't really come in here. So one can virtually ignore it. It's the community of the Buddha's disciples, in the widest sense. The word savaka or sravaka in Sanskrit is usually translated as disciple. But the literal meaning is hearer - one who hears, and that is quite significant, because in hearing, you're completely passive - you just receive. You don't have to do anything. Even with regard to sight you have at least to look, to turn the head, to direct the gaze, but when it's a question of hearing, well there's nothing of that - the sound waves just impinge on the drum of the ear and that's that. So you're completely passive, completely receptive. So a sravaka is not just a disciple, he's the hearer - he's the one who receives, the one who takes in, and in those days of course quite literally through the ear as that was the way of learning, there were no books, so the sravaka sangha can suggest, the community, the spiritual community, of those who are completely receptive to the Buddha's teaching - who open themselves to the Buddha's teaching, who offer no resistance to being penetrated by the Buddha's teaching. So one can take savaka or sravaka here in that wider or more general sense. So the use of this word sravaka or the disciple as we would say, does suggest the importance of receptivity in the spiritual life. But you've got to be open, you've got to be receptive to the positive, not just to everything indiscriminately. Not also to negative influences. [58] But in any case here that doesn't apply because Bhagavato savakasangho - the spiritual community of those who are disciples of, those who are open to, receptive to, the Buddha and the Buddha's teaching, they are supatipanno, this is the first of the attributes. The spiritual community of those who are the disciples of the Buddha, who are hearers of the Buddha's teaching, who are receptive to that, who are receptive to the Buddha himself. They are supatipanno. Patipanno means going or proceeding. Su means good, well, happily. They are the community of those who proceed well and happily. Positively, perhaps we could say. Positively proceeding is the community of the Buddha's disciples or the community of disciples of the Blessed One. You notice the use of the word bhagavato here. The more devotional term for the Buddha, which is more in keeping with the word savakha. Bhagavan as it were corresponds to sravaka. They are receptive to Him because for them He is the Blessed One. And because they regard Him in that way they are His disciples. So they are well or happily or positively proceeding. That is one of the characteristics of the spiritual community. So what does this suggest? That it's active, that it's a community of people

engaged in practice. They're actually treading a path, following a certain method of development. And they're doing that well. Happily, properly even - positively, That's the first characteristic. And then *ujupatipanno*, *bhagavato savakasangho*. Similarly that community of disciples of the Buddha, the Blessed One are *ujupatipanno*. They are straightly proceeding. Uju means straight. In the quite ordinary colloquial sense. So they proceed straight. What do you think that means?

KR: Directly.

S: Directly. In a way by the shortest route. They don't go straying off into the by-paths. One of the famous Zen works, I think it's *On Trust in Heart* says "The Great Way is broad and plain for all to see, but the people love the by-paths. Because they do things like getting interested in astrology, I mean over-interested let's say, or you know, exploring flying saucers or things like that. They have a certain connection with the spiritual life perhaps, but they are rather fringe activities, so if you give the greater part of your [59] time and attention and interest to one or another of these things, then you're definitely straying off on to a by-path. You've left the main road as it were, you've left the great way, you're no longer proceeding straight. So that's very important and this particular term draws attention to that, the importance of keeping in the main road. But this of course could be misunderstood. It doesn't mean toeing the line all the time, and doing what you're supposed to do. It means keeping on the broad straight path of your own actual development. It means that, it doesn't mean being a good boy, being a good Buddhist, being a good order member in the narrow sense. It means occupying yourself consistently with what conduces to your overall development, as a human being, that's the straight path, at each turn off the road asking yourself, well which is the way forward for me? Which step is a step forward for me? What is going to help me to grow? What action should I take in order that I may grow? In this situation? That's the straight path. So the community of the Buddha's disciples are those who are following a straight path in this sense. In other words who are finally if not solely occupied with their individual spiritual development. And then *Nayapatipanno bhagavato savakasangho*. *Naya* means... It's usually translated proceeding according to method. Methodically proceeding. Sometimes it's translated as proceeding by rule, but it's not really that, but by method more. Do you know what is meant by method? What does that convey to you, proceeding according to method or in accordance with method?

KR: It suggests regular steps or systematically. (probably Bhante talks from here but original stays with KR ???)

For instance people who haven't done much in the way of meditation think that meditation means just sitting down and musing as it were. But there is a method, a systematic technique almost, of getting concentrated, you know like counting the breaths or doing the *metta bhavana* in a certain sequence of stages. So that all pertains to method. there's a definite way of going about it, it's a practical thing though there are certain definite things to be done in a certain order. It just doesn't happen. So it's this which is covered by the word *nyaya*. You go about it methodically, systematically, in a practical sort of way, not just in a vague general dreamy kind of way. [60] For instance if you are greedy as regards food, you know that you've got to tackle that systematically, you've got to adopt a certain method, maybe you've to take a vow that you won't eat between meals, maybe you give up certain things that you're particularly fond of. This is tackling that particular difficulty systematically, in a methodical fashion. You're not just hoping that the greed will go away some time. So the community of

the Buddha's disciples are proceeding methodically. They're not satisfied with a general feeling of going along, they're taking concrete positive steps, in a methodical practical way, to ensure that they do develop, just as they do say in the case say specifically say of meditation. They don't just meditate, they do the mindfulness of breathing, or they do a visualization practice or they do the recollection of the elements, there's no such thing as just meditating well, not unless you're very advanced and can just sit down and go into a higher state of consciousness. So one goes about it methodically. And then Samicopatipanno bhagavato savakasangho. The community of the Buddha's disciples are harmoniously proceeding. Proceeding together, in harmony. Samici. And this is very important. Why do you think that it's important?

KR: Well if the people that are putting all these things into practice aren't getting on with each other... you can say there's something seriously wrong.

S: And what do you think that could be? Supposing for instance they're all doing the same meditations, they're sharing the same philosophy, they're living more or less in the same sort of way, but they're not proceeding harmoniously, so why is that? What's getting in the way? What could get in the way?

KA: Negative emotions...

S: But let's assume in this instance that they're all doing the metta bhavana, they don't have negative emotions at least not while they're actually meditating, but still they don't really get on. What is it usually that just comes in the way of things?

KA: Competition

S: Competition comes in the way, yes

[61]

KA: Personalities...

S: Personalities... Personality seems to be the biggest factor. Because people are very different as personalities, temperaments are very different. So you don't get on and you don't really proceed harmoniously when the common element which is provided by your common practice and common way of life is not strong enough, not powerful enough to overcome or to resolve or to transcend the individual personal differences of temperament and so on.

KA: So if the members of a community, for example, aren't getting on with each other, what they should do is put more and more effort into their own practice.

S: Actually yes. Their own individual practice and their practice together. I mean that must be the common basis. So therefore it's one of the characteristics of the community of the Buddha's disciples that they get on well together that they proceed harmoniously. It's not playing harmoniously, except to the extent that play is also included in the path, play in a highly positive sense, but they're proceeding, that is to say they're actually travelling on the path harmoniously and together. But it's very easy just to operate on the level of personality and to be very much influenced by personal likes or dislikes, even in very trivial ways. You might for instance not particularly like people with ginger hair - I mean almost unconscious

but for some reason or other you just don't like them. Something as trivial as that. Or the way someone eats might really annoy you. I've actually known these sort of things happen. Or the certain way in which a person talks really irritates you. For no apparent really objective rational reason, but it has that sort of effect on you. Or you just don't like the way they are - you can't fault them as regards actual behaviour perhaps, but you just don't like them. You just don't like that type of person, maybe very distantly they remind you of your father or some hated brother, or someone like that or someone that you knew at school who was very nasty and mean to you. But sometimes these sort of reactions, these sort of likes and dislikes can influence one really powerfully, and almost determine your life. They certainly determine certain very important aspects of it. So in a spiritual community, especially the bigger it gets, you're going to have all sorts of people of so many [62] different kinds of temperament, so it should be possible for them to work and to proceed all harmoniously and together. If they experience any difficulty then they just have to strengthen that common element which is provided by their common practice, or practices.

KR: I think sometimes you tend to get difficult situations in a community because the common commitment's enough to stop people from just giving up and going off but still not quite enough for them to get over the differences between them.

S: And then there's the whole question of communication within the spiritual community. I mean there may not be actual temperamental difficulties, but there may not be a very free and open communication. Some members of the spiritual community may be a little blocked, and that prevents the free flow of communication. And therefore one may be jogging along together pretty well but there won't be that positive and dynamic togetherness. That seems to be aroused when people work on something very concrete together. I've certainly seen this happening at Aryatara, which formerly was a pleasant but rather sluggish sort of place. It's really dynamic now, especially since Nagabodhi went there and more especially since the St. Michael's Rd. project got going, this seems to have galvanized and unified all their energies. So these are the characteristics of the spiritual community among others, these were more relevant perhaps in the Buddha's day. They're equally relevant now, but there are other characteristics of the spiritual community I'm sure that we could think of, but to begin with at least this positively proceeding, straight forwardly or directly proceeding, methodically or systematically proceeding, and unitedly and harmoniously proceeding. So that's quite a lot to get on with for the time being. (laughter). *Yadidam catari purisayugani, attha purisa pugala esa bhagavato savakasangho.* So these words describe in a way not just the general characteristics of the spiritual community, but who - that is to say the kind of people of whom the spiritual community in the highest sense, that is to say the *Aryasangha* consists. And they are *catari purisayugani* - the four pairs of *purisas*, that is to say the [63] eight *purisas*, the eight persons who are individuals, or the eight individuals who are persons. The translation can be varied. You've got two terms here - you've got *purisa*, which literally means male, and *pudgalla* - *pudgalla*, which means more like person. So let's translate - they don't really correspond - but let's translate *purisa* by person and *pudgalla* by individual, though Conze translates *pudgalla* by person, let's do it the other way around. Then you've got this spiritual community indeed consists of the four pairs of persons, that is to say of those eight persons who are individuals. And who are those eight persons? That make up the *Aryasangha*? Have you any idea? *Esabhadgavato savakasangho.* They are the spiritual community of the Buddha's disciples. So who are these eight persons who are individuals?

KR: Well you've got the stream-entrant and one who has realized the fruit's of stream-entry,

the once-returner and one who has realized the fruit's of once-returning, the non-returner and the arhant.

S: As I have mentioned this was a later sort of classification. The earliest classification or distinction was the one who had entered the stream and then gone upstream. But here you've got this fourfold classification worked out on the basis of the numbers of fetters broken and the number of births remaining, or number of rebirths remaining. The crucial one really is the stream entrant. I mean this is where I've personally put all the stress, because this is more accessible, more immediate and more practical. So first of all there's the stream entrant. The stream-entrant technically is one who has broken the first three out of the ten fetters. And you know what they are don't you.

KA : Personality view, dependence on rights and ceremonies as ends in themselves, and...

S: Vicikitsa, which is doubt and indecision. So one needs to re-phrase these, one needs to re-interpret these. I do it in this way. Sakaya ditti is self view - that I am what I am, I am a fixed unchanging entity. I cannot change. So if you have this sort of view, that you cannot change, well how can you change? You have to accept the possibility of change. In other words you have to accept the fact that yourself, as you know yourself at present, is not the [64] ultimate irreducible, unchangeable you. If you regard what you are now as a fixed datum, something that cannot be changed, no progress is possible. And this can be rationalized in various philosophical forms, as it was in the Buddha's day. But basically most people do feel themselves to be what and who they are and they can't imagine themselves really as being very different. It's this basically which is sakayaditti. Personality view or self-view, that I am what I am and nothing's going to change me. I've given various examples of this. A man says, well, I've got a bad temper - too bad, that's the way I am. I was born that way, there's nothing I can do about it, you'll just have to get on with it. If you want to be friends with me you'll just have to accept the fact - that's the way god made me, I can't change. This is sakayaditti. So if you have this view, there's no progress possible, no individual development possible, so this is the first fetter. So if you really accept the fact of radical change, if you really accept the possibility of radical change in you as a person or as an individual, then you break the first fetter, you are open to change, you are open to further development. So this is absolutely essential. If you're not willing to grow, you know, what spiritual life can there be? So you could paraphrase this as willingness to grow.

KA: It's not just the lack of a belief of an intellectual sort...

S: Oh no, it isn't. It's not just that you don't accept a particular philosophy, no. Not at all. You won't of course, you won't accept certain philosophies which are based on this kind of attitude of resistance to growth, but you may intellectually accept the alternative philosophy, you may even intellectually accept Buddhist philosophy, the teaching of no-self, but still in practice remain completely bound by this first fetter, and make no effort whatever to change or to grow or to develop. You find Buddhists in the East saying "I am a born Buddhist, I'm a Buddhist already, there's nothing I have to do about it, I was born one, that's the way I am (laughter) I don't need to practise, I was born a Buddhist".

KR: It's sort of like not taking responsibility for yourself, isn't it?

[65]

S: Yes. For instance Atol says, in a passage which I've quoted in a lecture, words to the effect that one should not accept oneself as the person one was born as. That's just given to you on a plate - you shouldn't accept that as you, that's just your raw-material which you proceed to develop and fashion, not exactly in your own way, but in the best way for you. You don't accept yourself ready-made from your parents or from your education. Or from your general social and cultural conditioning.

KA: What a dreadful life that would be.

S: That's most peoples life, they accept themselves ready-made, they don't re-make themselves. Yeats says "Myself must I remake." "Like that William Blake, Who beat upon the wall till truth obeyed his call." So the first fetter represents resistance to change. Reluctance to grow. So there's no real spiritual life, no real entering the stream until you break that. You don't start developing until you accept the possibility, even the necessity of change in you; which means not accepting your present personality, your present conditioning, your present way of doing things, your present way of living, as ultimate. It's completely open to change. And then the second fetter is sila bratta paramassa. Dependence on moral rules and religious practices, as ends in themselves. It doesn't mean not using them at all, not making use of them, but it means being stuck in them and thinking that if you go through the right motions, well that's enough. It's external, mechanical observance, because the sila and the vratta, all these moral rules and religious practices, religious observances, these are meant to help one to grow, help one to develop. But you can not use them in that way. You just go through the motions, especially if going through these sort of motions is socially respectable or socially acceptable. You just go through the motions, but innerly you remain unchanged. So this is what sila vratta paramatta really is. Sometimes I've translated it as the fetter of conventional religiosity. Which hides from you, and hides from others, the fact that you are not changing and have no intention of changing, but you go through the motions of changing - like you go to church, which is supposed to indicate that you're [66] spiritually re-born, according to Christianity. (laughter). The same in some Buddhist countries. It's respectable to go to the vihara, it's respectable to feed the bhikkhus. I remember I was talking with Prince Lathakin of Burma, who married the second daughter of the last king of Burma, King Thibaw, I was talking with him once about the old days in Burma, the last days of the Burmese monarchy. King Thibaw was the last king of Burma, he was deposed in 1880 something by the British, and this friend of mine, Prince Latthakin with whom I stayed in Kalimpong for six months, had been married as almost a small boy to this king's second daughter. Who was also with him and who I also knew. And he was telling me quite a bit about the old days. And King Thibaw had the unpleasant habit of disposing of his relations, you find this in all the history books, the Burmese custom was that people were executed by being trampled to death by elephants, and in the case of members of the royal family they were put into red velvet bags, the red velvet was imported from Holland, and the elephants trampled on these red velvet bags. And he disposed of nearly a hundred of his relations. Firstly half-brothers and half-sisters, you know, children of the previous king, in this way, And he was a very bloody minded sort of man. So Prince Latthakin was telling me about all these sort of things. There was an absolute reign of terror in the palace in the end, therefore the British deposed him. So Prince Latthakin was telling me about all this and then he said "AH, you know, but he was a very good Buddhist, he always fed the monks." (laughter). He said it quite seriously, and he was not a fool this man, Prince Latthakin, but this is what he said "But he was a very good Buddhist, he always fed the monks." And yes, all the time this was going on he'd have a hundred monks at the palace everyday and always give them alms. He was a very good

Buddhist. Even that was a little bit of goodness you could say, a tiny scrap of punya in a ..., not counter balancing of course, but as distinct from this almost mass of papa. But this is, you could say, sila vrata paramasa in a way. Going through the motions. Yes, he feeds monks, endows temples, builds temples, gilds images, but look at the way he's really [67] living. But he thinks he's a good Buddhist, other people think he's a good Buddhist.

KR: You get the same with art, don't you, that it becomes respectable, and socially acceptable, whereas it's call can be quite revolutionary.

S: So sila vrata paramata is going through the motions of religion, spiritual life, individual development, but without actually meaning it. This is what it essentially is. So therefore sometimes say that this particular fetter represents conventional religiosity. And then thirdly, there's vicikitsa, or vicikitcha, which is doubt and indecision. Sort of wavering, inability to make up one's mind, or even unwillingness to make up one's mind, which means really a refusal to commit oneself, and this ties up with the other two fetters, because if you really want to change, if you are not attached to your old self, and you don't consider that ultimate and final, well you're willing to commit yourself to the future, to commit yourself to developing as an individual. But if you don't want to do that you'll make all sorts of excuses, you'll go through the motions, you'll shillyshally, you'll wobble, you'll rationalize, and that's all included under vicikitsa. Vicikitsa means unwillingness to make up your mind. Because if you make up your mind, well then you have to commit yourself, if you commit yourself you have to change. If you want to change you have to commit yourself. They're all inter-connected. So vicikitsa is that sort of vague woolly attitude that refuses to think things out, that refuses to follow things through to a conclusion. Because that might mean that you have to make some changes. So you're in a sense deliberately indecisive, you know the sort of thing I mean. And you go intellectually all sort of woolly. You refuse to think, because thinking might mean that you clarify things in such a way that certain decisions or lines of action are indicated, and you want to avoid that.

KA: I sometimes actually feel that process happen...

S: So you just confuse the whole issue, so that you can avoid having to make up your mind and commit yourself, adopt a certain line.

KR: Some people have got a real talent for it haven't they.

S Oh yes.

[68]

KA: Sometimes when that happens the person has actually got a glimmering of what's going to be the result of coming to that conclusion, so you deliberately don't, and once you've succeeded you're crippled by not doing it.

S: Sometimes I've said that these three fetters could be paraphrased as scientific psychology, conventional religion, and academic philosophy. Academic philosophy because you conceive of all conceivable philosophical options, you never commit yourself to any of them. (laughter). You weigh Plato against Aristotle, and Descartes against Spinoza, but you never even think of committing yourself to the practical implications of these philosophies. So sometimes I paraphrase this as the fetter of academic philosophy. What about scientific

psychology? How does that work out, the first fetter as the fetter of scientific psychology? Well scientific psychology is purely descriptive, it just sort of lists the mental contents and describes them as they are. There's no suggestion of any possibility of change. And conventional religion, well that's obvious isn't it.

KA: Another thing about scientific psychology is that modern psychology or psychiatry is very often based on getting a person to be able to live with himself, accept himself as he is.

S: Yes, whereas in a sense that's the last thing he should do. There is a sense in which you should accept yourself as you are, to start off with, but that also includes, surely, accepting your own capacity for change and development. Not accepting what you are now, or the kind of person you are now, as something fixed and final and unalterable. You don't have to learn to live with your bad temper, you have to get rid of it or develop a good temper. I mean if you've got say some physical defect that cannot be remedied, that you have to learn to live with, because it cannot be changed, but if it's a bad habit, or a certain mental attitude, you ought not to be encouraged to live with that because it can be changed. If you are born short and fat, well you just have to accept the fact, you might be able to modify the fatness, but you can't modify the shortness. If you are only 4ft. 8 there's nothing you can do about it, you have to accept that fact about yourself and work [69] with and from that. If you weren't born beautiful, too bad. You just have to make up for it by developing a pleasant character. Just accept the fact that you weren't born beautiful, not get hung up about it, or whatever else it may be. These are the first three fetters, so you know, if you are willing to change, willing to grow, willing to develop, if you don't ever just go through the motions of developing, you don't sort of adopt any particular method of developing and treat it as an end in itself, without reference to it's being a method of development, and if at the same time you're ready actually to commit yourself, then you enter the stream. Then, in other words, a permanent irreversible change starts taking place. And then, of course, further on, or further up, you break or at first you weaken, other fetters. It has been pointed out that the first three fetters are, as it were, intellectual. They're something to be worked out intellectually, something to be understood; but fetters four and five go deeper, they're more emotional. It's not that the first three fetters are simply matters of understanding theoretically, no - but they're more accessible intellectually. You can approach them intellectually. But with fetters four and five, you come up against purely emotional, even unconscious factors. Lets look at the full list, we may as well get them right, in the "Survey". Look up under samyojanas which is the term for fetters. (Kularatna looks them up) I think they're all there anyway, I can't always remember which is in what book, or what is in which book. Here we are...

KR: Those first three almost seem to be excuses,...

S: Yes they are, almost rationalizations ... avoidances.

KD: What did you say you paraphrased the second one as?

S: Conventional religion. Hmm .. there's a misprint here ... "the sakadagana, once-returner, is one who has succeeded in weakening without actually breaking the second and third fetters of sexual desire and ill-will." No, it's not second and third, but fourth and fifth. I must check this through for the next edition. But anyway it's clear that that is a mistake. All right so the fourth and fifth fetters are karmaraga and byapada. I've translated karma raga here as sexual desire, but that's probably a bit narrow, and byapada as ill-will. They're [70] very, very strong. Well,

not even emotionally, it's more basic than emotion even, they're more like tendencies of the whole being. To understand really what they're like one has to go back a little bit, go back to the whole distinction, not to say division not to say cleavage between subject and object. I mean all of our experienced is influenced by, or modified by, or even vitiated by the fact that it takes place within a framework of distinction between the subject and the object. There's a sort of basic fundamental sort of schism or schision between subject and object. There's also therefore a sort of tension between subject and object. You're either strongly drawn towards it or you're repulsed by it, repulsed from it. You get the idea? So the fact that there is this sort of schism between subject and object, that everything is looked at in this way, distorted in this way, this is ignorance. Avidya. And then on the basis of that ignorance you get the development of craving, of drishna or karma raga. which basically is the propulsion of the subject towards the object. Or it's repulsion by it. Not only that, but ill-will, byapada arises when your movement towards the object, your propulsion towards the object, your powerful attraction towards the object or your longing to unite with the object, which actually is not possible within the subject-object framework, is frustrated or impeded by some third factor. Then your craving turns into ill-will directed towards the impeding factor. Now in a way you could say that sexuality comes into it in this way. Karma chanda is desire or craving in general, but it's said to be sexual craving or sexual desire in particular for certain reason. You could say the sexual object represents the object in a special sort of way, because when there is a sexual object, your tendency towards it, your impulsion or your propulsion towards it is strongly marked. But this is actually what happens all the time, it's only in the case of the specifically sexual object it's intensified, so it becomes more obvious, more evident. But it's the same with regard to something to eat or just something you enjoy looking at. So the object of the sexual desire is a sort of 'object par excellence', and sexual craving therefore is in a way craving par excellence, or craving in a very representative capacity. [7I] Do you get the idea? And so you know very well that supposing you are attracted by a very desirable and attractive sexual object, and you're on your way to unite with that (laughter) (inaudible, but sounds like "and someone intervenes") Well what is your reaction? What is your emotional state then? It's byapada pure and simple. It might be your best friend cutting you out, but at least momentarily that's how you'll feel, you'll feel quite murderous perhaps. Depending on the strength of and intensity of your feeling, your desire. And all within a framework of overall avidya. So as long as you consider yourself as a separate individual, an ego, in other words, there is of course ignorance and there therefore must be this kind of craving, this impulsion or propulsion towards the object with the continual possibility of frustration and therefore ill-will, byapada, aversion resentment. So it's not so difficult really to understand that one can and must change and really accept that, it's not so difficult to realize that it's no use just going through the motions of change, it's not so difficult really to stop shillyshallying and commit oneself, but to start dismantling that overall framework of ignorance, that overall framework of subject object type of structure and relationship and therefore to weaken that kind of craving and that kind of aversion, that's much more difficult. But this is what one does in the case of the fourth and fifth fetters. You start working on your craving, which is not just desire in an ordinary sort of way, but this basic impulsion of the subject towards the object, trying to as it were complete itself, not by transcending the subject/object distinction but by hugging the object to itself, which can only be done for a certain length of time or to a certain extent. It's here again the sexual paradigm is very useful, because why are you so attracted to the sex-object? Say in the case of a woman, say that the sex object is a woman - there's something out there that you want because you feel that it will make you complete. So if you start developing that within yourself, you start developing, as it were, your own inner femininity, you don't project it on to the sex-object and try to unite with it there, then you'll be free or

relatively free from that strong craving for that particular object. So in the same way, when you try to overcome, or to resolve the [72] subject/object distinction, you try to get above that, then it's no longer a question of moving towards the object and trying to sort of incorporate that object, which you can't actually do, you can only sort of get up beside it and sort of squeeze it to yourself (laughter) and after a while it's taken away or goes away. You've lost it, and you have to do it all over again. You find this very much with sex, don't you, taking that as a paradigm. You know, that the satisfaction only lasts for a certain while, then you have to go into it all over again. Because you haven't done what you wanted to do basically, which was to unite. That's not possible. The only way you can really unite is by developing that element or that aspect within yourself. So it's the same within the general framework of subject object relationships. You have eventually to rise up above the distinction between subject and object, which is initially by developing a more refined individuality, a less coarse ego, as it were, with a finer movement towards a finer object. Not a gross clumsy, heavy ego with a gross clumsy, heavy, clutching movement towards a gross clumsy heavy object (laughter). You see what I mean? You have a rather soft delicate, diaphanous tender, subject, just very gently and delicately moving out to a relatively refined, subtle and graceful object. In that way the grossness and heaviness of the subject object distinction is sort of refined. It's not literally getting rid of it or rising above it. One must not take this expression literally, it's refining it, making it more diaphanous, more transparent, more subtle, more delicate.

KA: Is that what you're doing in visualization practice?

S: Yes, but it's a very very basic thing. to refine that very raw energy which is moving towards its object. All the time. So therefore it's said that the once-returned only weakens the fourth and fifth fetters. If you just succeed in weakening the fourth and fifth fetters, then you become a once returned. And then of course if you break them completely, you become a non-returned. You do not come back to the lower worlds at all, you're not reborn in the lower worlds.

KA: You never experience those states of consciousness again.

S: You never experience those states of consciousness again, those states of consciousness, [73] or those objective situations again. That is to say the karma loka - the world of sensual desire, the rupa loka - the world of form, or even the arupa loka. According to doctrinal tradition you're reborn in a higher sort of special level at the summit of the rupa loka, which is neither mundane nor perfectly transcendental.

KM: What's the difference between these stages of entering the path and experiencing the fruit of the path?

S: The path is the volitional aspect, when one actually does the things which pertain to stream entry, and the fruit is when you actually are a stream entrant, by virtue of having engaged in those particular (inaudible - one word) volitions. It corresponds to the distinction between karma and vipaka in the 12 nidanas. You know there's a cause process of the present life and effect process of the present life and so on. Magga corresponds to cause process and phala corresponds to effect process.

KM: So the first one is while certain things are happening...

S: You're in the process of becoming, yes, you are exerting yourself in the appropriate way, and in the case of the fruit, of the result, you experience the appropriate consequence of that exertion and are as it were in enjoyment of it.

KA: It occurs to me how important communication is with regard to the fourth and fifth fetter. Because within the context of communication you're working within as it were a tension, you're not necessarily caught up at either pole, so things are more diaphanous, within a communication.

S: Well, one does find that, that in real communication it's as though a solid subject and a solid object are no longer there. It's more like a relative polarization. The polarization is not absolute as it usually is in ordinary contact with people.

KA: So to the extent that we communicate, to that extent we are once-returners, but that doesn't seem ... I mean one can sometimes communicate and sometimes not communicate, so I think to draw these hard and fast distinctions can be misleading.

S: Of course this links up again with the Vajrayana, because in the Vajrayana there are what some writers like to call sexo-yogic practices. These arouse everybody's interest and [74] curiosity at once, but it's not really like that. It simply takes the sexual situation as a sort of paradigm, to begin with at least, because there is this very definite polarization in the grossest and almost crudest sense. There's a polarization between male and female, and the consequent powerful attraction and repulsion, and therefore the possibility for both craving and aversion. And it tries as it were to refine this from a sexual congress to an actual communication, so that... put it this way, if I were to put it diagrammatically, this has just occurred to me, it could be done like that. Got a pencil and paper? One could say that what usually happens is something more like this... subject - object, though each of course is subject and object for the other. There's just this infinitesimal point of contact, otherwise there's a complete polarization. Then you could say it becomes a bit more like a peanut... , or you could even substitute there a dotted line. This represents the subject/object polarity existing more within a framework of unity almost, and then you could say you have something more like this... And then you could say you have something more like that... or even something more like that... But the aim, or one of the aims of the Vajrayana you could say is depolarization. But that means you have to start with a polarization, before you can depolarize. So that's why, in a sense, the Tantra starts with sex. Taking that as a paradigm for that extreme polarization between subject and object. And you notice that some of the sadhanas are concerned with the resolution of some of the tension between subject and object, especially the Manjughosa one and the Avalokiteshvara Mahakarunika one, and you actually, if you do these practices, you get a sort of experience of a state in which subject and object are not so fully polarized as usual and you get that also sometimes in communication with people sometimes, when it becomes real communication. There is polarization without that tension.

KM: Which is why it's so much more difficult to experience real communication between a man and a woman.

S: Because the polarization is so powerful. ( there is a diagram in the archive original following this page but unnumbered) [75] On the other hand there has to be a little bit of polarization in communication, otherwise it's too weak, too tepid, like when you just sort of like someone in a sort of vague acquaintance like sort of way. Well you never communicate

then, can you? So there has to be a sort of modicum of tension, not so much that communication is always so sharply polarized that you set up that figure of eight situation, but on the other hand not so tepid that there's nothing to work with.

KM: That tepidness is just a sort of non-individuality.

S: Well it's non-relating. You've got to relate before you can communicate. So you can see that the transition from breaking the first three fetters to breaking or even weakening the fourth and fifth is quite an important one, and it's something that most people don't even begin to touch upon. Well, even those who do succeed in breaking the first three, it's not very often that they can get on to breaking the fourth and the fifth. Or even weakening them, which would make them a once-returner. And then the arhant succeeds in breaking all the remaining five. We won't go into those in detail because they're really a bit irrelevant at the moment. We'll just look at them. They're ruparaga, or desire for rebirth in the higher world of form, the archetypal plane; desire for existence in the formless world, the world of formless consciousness one could say; conceit - the idea of oneself as equal to, superior to or inferior to anybody else when there's no comparison at all because there's virtually no polarization, and restlessness in the sense of just a movement, and of course ignorance - he breaks the fetter of the subject/object structure altogether.

KA: So in a way we don't have to worry about seeing others in (inaudible)...

S: No, because there's a natural momentum. Once you enter the stream, which carries you forward.

KR: So it's the first three we've really got to work on.

[76]

S: It's the first three and also the beginning of the fourth and the fifth. The Vajrayana seems to tackle those quite effectively.

KM: So the first three you could say in a way are a recognition of the non-fixed nature of the ego, and later on you realize that even that isn't quite right, that in fact you progressively realize that even a non-fixed idea of an ego is too fixed.

S: Yes, yes ... So the spiritual community, the community of the Buddha's disciples, consists of these four pairs of persons, these eight persons who are individuals. The stream entrant, the once-returner and the non-returner and the arhant. Sub-divided according to path and to fruit. The stream-entrant, it is said, will be re-born on Earth, not more than seven times, the once-returner only once, the non-returner not at all, he'll be reborn in a special world called the pure abode and will gain Nirvana directly from there, and the arhant is liberated here and now in this life itself. Perhaps one shouldn't take this question of number of rebirths too literally, but you can see the general sense of it, that the repercussions become, as it were, less and less gross, more and more subtle.

KA: There's been a feeling in the movement that something like stream-entry is... even stream entry is a bit sort of beyond us.

S: One shouldn't really feel that. And as I've pointed out on the convention, I think, that so

long as one isn't a stream entrant one can fall right back and right away, it's only after stream-entry that one becomes irreversible, irreversible from Enlightenment - that is you can not fall back. You may not make very much more progress, but you cannot fall back on to the wheel as it were. If you haven't entered the stream, you could give up the path completely, give up all your efforts to evolve, fall right back, forget all about Buddhism, forget all about the order - you could just leave, you could just drop out and be just what you were before if not worse. So therefore stream-entry becomes very very important, and that is what it consists in, the breaking of those three fetters. The actual sort of realization that one isn't ultimately what one is now, that one can change and is willing to change, and then that [77] there's no use just going through the motions of development, you have really to develop. Add also that you commit yourself to that, you don't waver, you don't rationalize. You do give all your being, all your energy to that. So in the Buddha's day people became stream entrants it seems at the same moment virtually that they went for refuge. In a way in the highest sense going for refuge and stream-entry are the same thing, but in the case of most people the going for refuge is a separate thing from stream-entry, it precedes it. In a way it's a sort of anticipation of it.

KA: It can be like the purely intellectual form.

S:- you could say that going for refuge is like going through the motions of stream-entry; but going through the motions in a positive, healthy way, that prepares you for the real thing.

KM: It is in a way seeing these three things, but at a lesser level, at a more mental level only, with less power.

S: Yes, with less power.

KA: Perhaps it's weakening those things...

KR: Do you think it's possible to become dependent on meditation? In a dependence on rights and rituals sort of way?

S: Well, there are two things here, one would be going through the motions of meditation, that is to say that it just becomes a habit that you go into the shrine, that you sit, you know you chant a bit and you sit there quietly, but actually you're not meditating in the sense that you are not generating positive higher states of consciousness, you're just sitting there in a quiet relaxed dreamy sort of way. That would be one way of falling a victim to meditation as sila vrata ... the other way would be when you actually are experiencing quite higher states of consciousness, but you become attached to those and you don't want anything to do with the world or other people - you just want to remain absorbed in those higher stages of consciousness - they become an end in themselves... (inaudible).

KR: That's hedonism.

[78]

S: It's the higher hedonism. Yes.

KA: But it's OK at the moment...

S: Right, yes, for those immersed in the lower hedonism, the higher hedonism represents a considerable advance. (laughter) Progress. Also, you mustn't exclude that hedonistic element, even lower hedonistic element in the sense of regarding pleasure, or pleasurable sensations as somehow evil or undesirable. Because we've so much in the way of our Christian heritage to contend with, that we have to be a bit cautious here. Pleasure is all right, pleasurable sensations are all right, lower or higher. The danger arises when it becomes the basis for strong craving or strong attachment. I mean higher meditative experiences are intensely pleasurable. And it's right that they should be so, but the pleasurableness mustn't prevent one from going on to even higher experiences. Anyway let's stop there for the moment and have a little drink, then finish.

I mean usually what happens is that we see that object and we move towards it, but the essence of the aesthetic approach is - or the aesthetic attitude - you just contemplate it and enjoy it and appreciate it, as it were for its own sake, without moving towards it, there's a suspension of craving, or a suspension of desire, as Schopenhauer pointed out, in aesthetic appreciation, and that provides the analogy between the aesthetic and the spiritual. In the case of the spiritual it's not that you close your eyes to the beauty, you don't want to possess it, you're content just to enjoy it, contemplatively.

KA: So in a way you can't have an ethical relationship with someone unless you're in communication with them.

S: Yes, unless your attitude towards them is a responsible one. Otherwise it's merely exploitative.

KA: And other-regarding; you are aware of them.

S: Yes... All right lets leave the four pairs of persons, the eight persons who are individuals. Though maybe we should just point out puggala as individual - one can use [79] the word individual in three distinct senses - what I call the statistical individual, one who is an individual simply in the sense that he's got a separate body, but is really one of the group, the crowd, the herd and so on. This is what I call a statistical individual. Then one can say that there's somebody who I call an individual sort of psychologically, that is to say he does thing for himself, he has a measure of self-awareness and so on. He isn't just one of the group or one of the herd. But he isn't a stream-entrant. An individual in the highest sense, say with a capital I, is one who is a stream-entrant or more. That is the true individual. So puggala represents that. Puggala is the true individual. The individualist is simply a stronger member of the herd - a statistical individual who happens to have more strength or more cunning than other members of the same group. Then more epithets of the community of the Buddha's disciples. They are ahuneyyo. Ahuneyyo is the imperative mood of the verb... it's translated sometimes as worthy of worship, or worthy of respect or to be respected. The idea being that if you yourself are not an individual, if you yourself are not a member of the spiritual community, your natural attitude towards those who are should be one of respect. Pahuneyyo - to be hospitably received, you should open your doors to them,. Dakhineyyo - they are to be made offerings to. You should give to them, help them, support them in any way you can. This should be your natural reaction, your natural response and then anjalicaraneyyo, anjali is with folded hands - to be worshipped or to be respected even with folded hands. In other words not just ordinary social respect, but even a positive almost religious devotion you should have towards them.

KA: It's like a sort of natural aristocracy.

S: Yes. But it's not a question of anybody saying "Well I am an individual, (with or without the capital letter) and you are not and you ought to respect me!" It's a question more of people generally keeping open the channels of communication, and if the channels of communication are open, then it will be sort of naturally felt that one person has got more to give' the other is more on the receiving end, relatively speaking, though again the situation [80] may change. In a certain situation one person may be the receiver, the other the giver and in another situation the roles may be completely reversed. So it's a question of being open. An individual doesn't regard his individuality as a position which he has to establish, and which he has to assert in relation to others. If he does that he's not an individual, he's simply an individualist, a dominant member of the group, or dominating member of the group. We find this sometimes say in connection with this question say of seniority within the order. Certainly people who are more senior, more experienced, should be respected, but your seniority is not something on which you can take your stand, and from that assert yourself. "Well, I am a senior Order member, and therefore you ought to do what I say etc. etc." Or "I am the one to lead!" It doesn't really follow. If you are inclined to do that or to adopt that attitude, well you may be senior technically, but you're not senior in terms of real maturity.

KR: That's seeing the order as a sort of group.

S: Yes indeed.

KA: It can be very difficult for more senior order members to stand receptive to more junior order members when the occasion arises.

S: It's going to get increasingly more difficult. I mean those who are junior now may be having quite a happy time challenging the senior ones, but wait until you become senior, and you're challenged by an even more virile generation of even younger order members. Let's wait and see. You may have quite a tough time in the future, who knows. Unless you've really kept up to scratch. If you have it will be fun being challenged by the younger ones, you'll thoroughly enjoy it. You'll enjoy their spirit and their wish to challenge you, or their efforts to challenge you, but you know perfectly well that you can deal with it and you can cope - so you know it's just like a play, you're quite happy with it, you quite enjoy it. You like to see them doing that, because it's part of the way in which they grow. So you know, as between any two people, certainly within the context of the spiritual community, there can be no question of anybody claiming to be superior. This is a very important [81] point. I emphasize the 'claiming'. You know, chances are that one will be superior, but there's absolutely no need to make any point of it at all, much less still to insist upon it. Both are open, then it will become evident who is relatively more the giver, who is relatively more the receiver. That will be felt and experienced by those concerned, nobody need to establish that or seek to establish that as a sort of formal position, that's totally unnecessary, not only unnecessary, it's anti-spiritual. It's totally out of place within the spiritual community

KM: You could say, couldn't you, that if somebody asks for your respect they don't deserve it.

S: Right, yes,... So one should begin, if one begins from any position, one begins from a position of complete equality. You assume, to begin with, complete equality, in the sense that that is the position from which you start, because before you are really open with one another

before you have any real communication, I mean how do you know who is superior and who is inferior? If in fact those are terms to be used at all. You don't know. So you assume that the other person is as good as you are, you assume that you are as good as the other person, until such time as having opened up real communication, it begins to be obvious, or apparent to both of you, that in fact there are certain inequalities, or perhaps even overall inequalities, and then you adjust accordingly, in a natural spontaneous manner. So one should be open to the possibility of even the newest and youngest order member, you know, having something to teach you or having something to give you or to show you. One must always be open to that possibility - at least in certain respects. Even if he may not be overall more mature than you, but nonetheless, there may be things that you can learn from him, things which he may be able to show you. Or it may be that there's an overall superiority to you, you have to be open to that possibility as well. So you start off thinking he's just as good as you, and you're just as good as him, you start communicating, you see where it leads, what the actual situation is. Of course, if people start off with a rigid dogmatic assumption of [82] equality, then they are not able to communicate. If they assume that they are necessarily as good as anybody else, and no matter how much they communicate they will never discover any superiority in anybody else, if they've got that dogmatic view of equality, well they never will discover say, your superiority, if in fact you are superior, and there will be no communication. Because they will be trying to communicate on false terms. In other words, if in fact, you are superior to them, and they are insisting on being equal, no real communication will be possible. Because they are blocking you off. They are not willing to receive from you, which would be the natural thing, if in fact you are superior to, or more experienced, more mature than them. If they are so hung up on this dogma of equality, and everybody being the same, everybody being equally good, then that will effectively block the channels of communication. If in fact they really believe that there's nothing they could possibly learn from you, well then they won't. But if, within the spiritual community there's any attempt to assert a position of superiority, or seniority, then that immediately turns the situation from a spiritual community type situation to an ordinary group type situation. You're exercising power then, instead of metta, or seeking to exercise power, instead of emanating metta.

KM: How does one go about restoring the balance if that happens?

S: The first thing is that you see what is happening, you recognize, you realize what is happening, you don't do it yourself, or you cease to do it yourself, and you point out to others, where necessary, that this is in fact what is happening, or what they are doing. Point it out with good will. If they really are committed and sincere, and if they are doing it, and then you point it out to them, then they will see this. It's a very important point, a very important distinction.

KA: They won't really be able to [inaudible]

S: That's true. By the way I'm using the word power here in a different sense from that in which Chintamani uses it in his articles, and in which I sometimes use it. That's a bit confusing but you see that there are these different usages.

[83]

KA: Seeking to dominate...

S: Yes.

KA: If they have real power, it's obvious.

S: But one could say that in dealing with people who are not individuals, the use of power cannot be ruled out.

KA: Yes.

S: I mean if you are not to be overwhelmed by them. You may have to use it just in self-defence, to protect yourself.

KA: You could even use it for their own good.

S: Yes, though, of course, here one is on rather dangerous ground (laughter). Perhaps we shouldn't even say that in public. Otherwise you become like Plato's guardians, or like Big Brother. And knowing what is good for other people, which is a quite dangerous situation, though in fact, sometimes it may actually occur. It's not that that situation can be ruled out, altogether.

KA: But it must be real, and not just a rationalization.

S: It mustn't just be a rationalization of your own desire to dominate. Anyway these also are characteristics of the spiritual community, that they are to be respected, receive hospitably, made offerings to, even revered, by those who are not members of the spiritual community. But that this recognition should be natural and spontaneous. It isn't anything that can be insisted upon. And the spiritual community is also annuttaram punyaketam lokasati. The supreme, the unexcelled field of merit for the world. This needs a bit of explanation. If you plant a seed in a field, what happens? It germinates, you get something from it later on. So in the same way, according to tradition, if you make an offering, if you give something to someone who is spiritually worthy, there accrues from that offering to you, merit. Which helps you to have a good rebirth. It's also believed that the more meritorious, the more holy, the person to whom you offer, say if it's an arhant or a Buddha, [84] the greater the amount of punya will redound to you. So therefore in a general way, since the spiritual community contains all these highly developed individuals, it is the best field of merit, it is the best field to sow, as it were, the seed of your offering, in order to reap fruit in the form of merit. One could look at this sociologically, because this doctrine secures to the monks, in the technical sense, their support from the laity. The laity believe that by supporting them, by making offerings to them, they are benefiting themselves. Which has a sociological, even a spiritual value, but which perhaps can be looked at in another way also. A bit like this for instance, a bit like my aphorism which I think I quoted the other day, - "It's a waste of time helping the weak, nowadays it's the strong who need help." So if you help someone who is strong, it's better that helping someone who is weak. The strong person will do more with that help. It's not a good investment for those who are not members of the spiritual community. It does tend to be a bit like this in some Theravada countries. The ordinary laity lead a quite unspiritual life, don't take Buddhism seriously, but they make lots of offerings to the monks who are taking Buddhism at least a bit more seriously and they believe that they're earning merit in that way and that will secure them a good rebirth and blessings in future lives. That isn't a very good way of practising the Dharma one might say, though there's some value in it. It's better to look on the spiritual community more as a source of inspiration, and as the people who are really able to use your co-operation, and who are able to help you just by being what

they are, rather than just regard them as a good investment, for your offerings. So these are the qualities or the attributes of the Sangha, and in that Sangha or to that Sangha, that spiritual community one goes for refuge as long as one's life lasts. And then follow the same verses:

To all the Sanghas of the past,  
The Sanghas of the future,  
The Sanghas of the present age,  
I make always, salutation.  
I've no other refuge but those Sanghas [85]  
For me they are the highest refuge  
By virtue of this truth for me may there be an auspicious celebration.

So there it is. That's the Vandana. There's probably even more that could be said, but I think we've dealt with it fairly adequately. Anyway, any knotty points, doubts or difficulties, anything still not quite clear? You can see that it wouldn't be difficult to give a talk just on the Vandana, you'd have plenty of material, even if you just used your own notes. Well one need not wander off into all the digressions that we did, maybe stick more to the actual text, but even if one did that one would have a lot of material.

THE END